

JOHN HEATHLYN OF THE OTWAY

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INTRODUCTION

*A holy seed in garden grew displaying faith
and love :*

*Though vicious force upon it blew it could
not love remove.*

*Fruit so rich 'neath petals' trust remains in
calyx sweet,*

*Accepts the virtues, takes of dust, and dares
the worst to meet.*

*The Giver's breath touched even that bloom,
this by eternal right :*

*At last dispelled the gathering gloom of this
world's mortal night.*

JOHN HEATHLYN OF THE OTWAY

CHAPTER I

MAN IN THE MAKING

JOHN HEATHLYN did not for a moment imagine that he was an ideal type of manhood, but he was always able to see beauty in other persons and other things.

Where man ultimately succeeds you can rest assured that a good woman's influence had been in the fashioning of that life.

Every man is under an influence, life is that of ministry or service, environment counts for a lot—true vocation demands it, and the seed will not put forth its strength in soil which does not promise it natural development.

John Heathlyn had a mother ; John was the man who knew how much he owed

to that maternal breast. Her heart had nurtured and nourished him with the happiest of surroundings—she knew what was best for her boy as he became the man.

It is only mother who truly apprehends man in his real self, others can only judge by those activities which momentarily express only this or that character that is but part of a complete personality. How easy it is for man to involve himself—he can become quite untranslatable behind this fabric, this state or condition of earth in which he is for a season clothed. With wonderful reserve he can change or readjust his habit, then his actions will become the veil which hides. It is a weak thing that is ever confessing its shortcomings to the slander of those who are his conscience.

The man who knows where to place his trust, knows how far he can trust himself : this, John Heathlyn knew—he found his vocation, or at least a mother's mind had guided.

Let us look into a home in a certain prosperous agricultural district where once gold-mining had called out the hopeful and speculative genius of our race. There

was a gracious urbanity in the mother who had faced life upon the passing of her husband to that higher state. There was a patient persistence of love in that mother with a babe two weeks old who sought a place in public avenues to win bread for six other little ones. There was that in that woman which the name mother could alone lend truthful interpretation to. With a modest income, her eldest child an invalid, her youngest still holding by tendrils of necessity essential, Mrs. Heathlyn quietly pursued her studies until she was able to enter upon the duty of bread-winner.

The children grew in moral strength, nothing that they received from that home could hurt them ; but, life without had to be faced.

John's mother was ever actively engaged ; when she found the opportunity she carefully read through the most instructive columns of the paper. Just before as carefully folding it up as she had as neatly received it, she hesitates, for a step is heard drawing near to her office door.

" John, dear, look at that leading article. I am sure that it will interest you."

The young man is always interested in

the pearl his mother finds. Never a day passes without a gem of value goes to the threaded store of memory. Now he turns his attention to the column his mother had found pleasure in, and stops at the following, to think upon: "It is pleasing to see the spirit of the sires in the sons: that indomitable pioneering element which determines man's field for him."

"It is a very worthy suggestion, mother, dear; if there is one thing we all want nowadays, it is encouragement."

"Some folk think that you are very like me, my son. I have always seen much in you that reminds me of your father; in fact, every one of you, I am glad to say, resemble him."

Quietly the great man in John comes to light. Turning to his mother and tenderly kissing her, he said: "I would be like you if I could. I do not remember my father; you have been everything to me, and still I fail to account myself worthy of either of you."

"Boy, the best fail at times—man begins in dependence: there is One who knows best how to show us our weaknesses; our failures may be helpful to others, but once

we know the truth there is only one way of proving it."

The strong man is seen in that son who in after life said: "It is a coward who blames hereditary predisposition for his failures; the knowing is warning sufficient for any who call themselves men."

John came in to see what he could do in little ways to help the one who had so long helped him and still helped the more.

"There was nothing in your father that you could be ashamed of, John. His winsome sympathy was only equalled by his natural and unaffected courtesy; he had a charming personality which so perfectly graced the appointment he received in this country."

"Mother, that reminds me of what Alwood told me the other day of father. He said: 'Your father had the peculiar power of commanding respect from others as he did his duty. He never weakly submitted to any injustice, neither did he impose it; always exercising a meek reserve of strength, no one dare snub him; in his presence the public felt at ease and arrogant ones became subdued. All felt a depen-

dence upon the man who spoke with authority and pretended nothing.' "

This speech the mother listened to as any loyal wife might. Any listener or watcher would have thought that the one she had entered the fulness of life here with, was quite close beside her.

" I am glad that Alwood has such a kind thought for your father. I remember how your father spoke of him in days gone by, when he was his clerk. I am sure he emulated your father in many things."

Both turn to respective duties which presented themselves, occasionally conversing on other matters.

Coming into tea one evening, the mother turned to her sons, saying : " Another old friend of your father's turned up to-day. He is going to look you all up. He wanted to know were any of you at all like him ; did you do every duty as a pleasure, not imagining it a bother. Your father did everything with such hearty good will that others found it a pleasure waiting on him ; he always felt the merit and compensation which his ready acquiescence and endeavoured compliance to duty gained."

John turns to the head of the table in

response, saying, "Mother, you and father must have been very much alike."

John and his brothers are soon threshing out their differences of opinion about men's duties ; all the boys were little or lesser lights on committees of clubs and lodges in the town. Public deference sat comfortably on them all, many limited groups enjoyed their society and ungrudged service, none of them entertained large ideas of that which some so often imagine 'their right.' They were not social slaves, though John was apt to be a little indulgent and over-generous. This, his mother tried to restrain : she was a merciful mother, and her influence was never lost.

John had had many disappointments ; he had always had large anticipations. When he was most deeply disappointed, others did not have to share it.

Walking with Harold Cuthbert, his old friend, he did at times unburden himself. Harold's lot had fallen where there was more material than comfort, more opportunity for learning than the gain of any valuable acquisition. John did not say it, but he often thought that his friend Harold was a most fortunate humbug. To the

humbug he said : " There is no such thing as luck or chance in this world. If it is reasonable to believe that every atom in detail is necessary to perfectly display the physical world, it is equally consequent that everything in the moral world be purposefully determined."

Harold never really understood John ; he only thought that he was making fair headway for a position as a moral reformer, and that he tasted nectar mystically drawn from founts he knew nothing about. At least, he once said to John's sister, " Your brother can neither find an excuse, nor see an accident ; he has a sweet way of arriving at a reason for everything ; he has a kind way of saying—' You are responsible ' ! "

The house a man comes out of is that by which the man is judged, also the house he enters. His success is either dependent upon likeliness to his like, or kindness to his kind ; all he does is either comparatively done or contrastingly prospected.

John's best friends expected him to achieve something of value.

Alwood stopped him one day and said : " John, my lad, do not become an automatic cash register ; do not live in the

clouds of dreamland, come down to this solid piece of earth of Australia. Here you have a vast field—pedestals await the memorial to those right sort of fellows who honour the name they bear.”

“ Mr. Alwood, the true patriot is patient, he is of better stuff than that which impulsive enthusiasm incarnates at any moment. There is nothing to view so much prospectively, as that which is in the great perspective of the traditional hills experience has behind ; we must look back to see how high it is for man to arise—there is no higher plane than the highest plane that was. Better men than me established themselves in history by lifting their fellows—can you see a way out for me ? ”

“ Yes, John, do not go beyond yourself to see that which is in you ; also remember that the field is occupied by people who have other than your immediate experiences—all no doubt of value. Every man is responsible, every man has a beginning—he is born conscious of his manhood ; born, I say, a responsible unit, not one part of an evolved process. The Maker, to prove this to him, made him embrace many characteristic differences which became psychically

fixed through two channels. Do not shift responsibility and then imagine that another carries it for you."

It took some time for John to answer this piece of instruction ; when he did, it was with eloquence :

" My father's trusted friend opens a large field for my review. It will take a whole lifetime to understandingly express and interpret all that which your counsel lays before me. I can at least try and understand myself."

A soft breeze is gently moving through the branches of a peach-tree which is within the fence where these two men are standing. Alwood, noticing the fall of those pretty petals at his feet, is moved to draw John's attention also.

" What we all live for is bound to come, that is, if we live to that end. We have no regrets as we witness beauty and softness give way to that which is of greater utility ; many petals fall, many inoculations transmitted to the grace of another cluster before that which is required comes to the fruit."

" Well, Mr. Alwood, I do hope that I will be judged a worthy creature when the

summing-up comes. Yesterday I noticed a grub on the vine at the verandah's edge. It launched one soft strand of webbing ; this floated outward for the quietly moving atmosphere to carry to the thing most substantial at its length—it becomes a fixture. Then the little weaver essayed that road ; trustfully had it cast for the future, and to what lay beyond it faithfully ventured. Man is wanting in the right sort of confidence, I think."

Alwood never missed a chance of a chat with "Heathlyn's boy," as he called him. He owed a good deal to the father's associations ; his own son was now occupying a promising professional place in the city, and nothing would have pleased him more than to see John his son's partner. Bidding him good-evening, he kindly drops encouragement :

"John, opportunities are ever presenting themselves to us ; some are temptations to be overcome, some are trials to be endured until we realize the strength that is ours. Aim high ; look from beneath until you lift your eye to the mark you desire to hit. Do not be tempted to hit an easy distance, do not rest in the first easy place

—application breeds and cultivates assurance."

These little chats did John good ; there was so much to think about, so much to again open before those at home — his mother never discouraged her boys and girls when they endeavoured to give expression to the thoughts that were theirs.

They are all home to-night by the same train, for late dinner together ; lunch-bags had their respective contents removed for airing, and the young men are in the dining-room enjoying a breezy chat with Harold Cuthbert's sister, who is going to spend the evening with the household. John and she had been great friends. Though, as a rule, he did not pay much attention to his sisters' other friends, Miss Cuthbert was firing his ambition a little. She was a sensible little lady who very readily found a warm spot under a manly jacket.

The bright and charming little woman is infecting this group of cheerful young people with her own unaffected virtues.

Quickly she turns to the sober John, saying, " Did you notice that Gus Treadwell had at last figured conspicuously at the

Bar? There is a lot of his father about him."

Others more glibly in language lever Gus to a platform of prominence, until John is ready to speak.

"Yes, his father was a public success, without doubt. He made hard roads for his son to walk on; he wanted others to follow the same tracks too. I remember chatting to him one day in his grounds, when the shade of his elms were at their best. He said: 'I wish I could persuade the shire council to cut down those old gums which skirt the roads—they will not permit the roads to dry up and allow inotoring.' Gus Treadwell's father is ever ready to expose others when he has gained his own shade."

"Then you did read the case, John. I always liked Gus, though. Now I see what you see: it is not good to prey upon others' exposed weaknesses."

Mrs. Heathlyn moves the conversation to another man's criticism: "Miss Cuthbert, when John was a little chap he used to get up on this chair, when the table was cleared, with an old pack of cards; here, he would build for himself castles.

His sister, who was darning, inadvertently drew upon the soft cloth and his castle fell. Just for a moment he looked vexed, so I quickly took the cloth and folded it back, giving to him the smooth top of the table to build upon. His new building was almost complete, when another sister came and occupied the chair near him, which I had vacated. Throwing her atlas down quickly beside her, the breeze which was passing over the world struck John's castle ; down it fell. John neither looked sorry nor vexed, he only quietly picked up the pieces, and sitting down by the fire on the stiff hearth-rug, he built on until he fell to sleep."

Everyone looked at John. Miss Cuthbert said: "Where do you intend to build now, John?"

John laughed, as he said, "It does not do to use other people's worn-out fixings, the edges don't hold: must see about buying my own."

"Never mind, John," comes from the mother. "Someday the castle you dreamt of will be inhabited with nice folk."

"I am giving up those things, mother, dear. If a man builds on soft things some-

one is sure to impose upon him. If a man builds on smooth things, other influences will upset his calculations. If he gets down to bedrock, he will feel comfortable and content."

"Your old philosopher, Mrs. Heathlyn, is going to make us all acknowledge him a master-builder," says Miss Cuthbert.

Castle building—dream castles—are for some time discussed by all, until John delivers himself of his feelings upon these.

"I was a dreamer. I dreamt for you, mother, I even dreamt for another I will not mention; anyway, my castles in the air crumbled—down, down they came. Do you ever remember hearing any fall upon this home? I do not think that anyone was disturbed when they vanished—visionary projects do not materialize sufficiently for anyone's advantage, do they?"

Everyone rose from the table to allow the sisters to clear away, as one said, "Maybe John wants the end to-night, to have another try!"

An hour later, other young folk coming in, everyone went out into the sitting-room, where music was much enjoyed.

John was not the best singer in the house, but he always pleased everyone. Coming out of the room, he finds his mother, who is busy elsewhere ; here, he breathes his hopes to her.

Little did these two think that so many grave troubles would intervene before John's hopes would become fulfilled. Days rolled by into months, then each year a cloud ; but, never a cloud without a bright edge.

Time passed so rapidly that seven years' absence from home was hardly noticed. John writes to the mother he loved :

“ I am coming home for this Christmas with you all. Seven years of varied experiences determines my life. I have offered for mission work in the out-back country. I hope that you are all now satisfied that my building is established upon a Rock.”

There is no parting without its sadness, and they who love deeply feel keenly.

There is a meeting which carries gladness, and those who best understand each other never fail to reciprocate kindly feelings.

CHAPTER II

THINGS OF INFLUENCE

Home, the gracious name for rest,
Within love's garden sweet :
Surely man is herein blest,
Where welcome smiles will greet.

"HOME, nearly home ; mother will be anxiously waiting for me. How graciously she shared all she ever had with us all. How gradually and slowly I have become truly awakened to the wisdom that she ever surrounded me with ; with true love and little fondness how carefully she endeavoured to harness upon her offspring weapons of defence adaptable to life's varied social and domestic encounters."

The vessel is now being handled by a little tug, which assertively clings to a hawser. John Heathlyn is in pensive abstraction ; his thoughts at times almost become articulate. Once he actually gives

a word expression. Another standing by turns round, saying, "I beg your pardon, sir, did you speak?" "I may have," says John; "I have such a lot to tell folk."

Relapsing into reverie he sees only one soul; it is a picture of his mother.

"What a softness sublime gently communicated my mother's love to me. As a babe I clingingly turned to her; affectionately she reposed my feelings at every little distemper. Adolescence, with its peculiar self-assertiveness, awakened the youth to choice and acquisition; mother's quick initiative unobtrusively turns the warp and woof of life's moral fabric into a corrected and better patterned thing. Strength grows with strength, soul meets soul in that exquisite intercommunion which wanteth not speech nor tongue to faithfully interpret."

"Wonderful!" This he says aloud.

"Indeed it is," says his nearest fellow traveller. "I have been watching the movements of that little vessel as interestedly as you. It is wonderful, when you come to think of it, that such a little engine could do so much."

"You are right, friend, the little things count."

The fenders are launched between the pier and vessel's side, as John turns down to his cabin to pick up his bags. On the companion-way he meets a lady who had made acquaintance with him on the journey over; she was a mother who had been far afield to see her boy.

"You are not far from your home now, Mr. Heathlyn. Your mother, I am sure, will be pleased to have you home again."

"No, madam! That mother of mine did try and make this plastic clay move to her finer instincts. Maternity wants all she gives, that is, bright and happy surroundings. Oh, that we men were only awake to our own necessities! Mothers ought to be ever circumstanced with all that which is chastely delicate in beauty, they have much to psychically impress."

He turns away as a soft tear, he need never have wanted to hide, issued to his cheek.

He is so preoccupied that he is in the hands of a cabman, and in the cab, before he knows where he is.

"Where to, sir?"

"Anywhere, as long as I catch the evening express."

Listlessness has not hold of him, neither is aimlessness stealing from him his alertness. No! Bitter reflections of sadness are mingled with the pangs of regrets. He went away weeping, with the bitter weed of worthless remorse clinging to him; now, he is a little overwhelmed with sorrow's sweeter plant of influence: he has conquered himself.

The railway-station is reached; the driver of the cab is all attention.

John turns to him and says, "Look here, Cabby, do not let any blushing failures bloom in your little lot; do not look over your neighbour's fence for the weeds in his garden when you turn the sorrel in in your own."

"Two shillings, sir, please! That reminds me, the missus did say something about a pot of red geranium; but, how did you know?"

"The meaning of red geranium is comforting. Good luck, old chap!"

With quick step he turns to the ticket-window, with eyes for no one.

"Second single for Up-along."

A sweet-faced little lady hears the voice, she knows it well enough ; by her side a porter is carrying her luggage. She quietly follows the man who had purchased the ticket for Up-along. Though she had a first return, it mattered not ; into the same compartment she goes just as the train moves off. The porter had already secured her seat opposite to John. It is Gladys Cuthbert.

The man is at this very moment wondering whether there is any change in her ; turning his eyes her way, all he sees is a shapely little woman with her face hidden behind a magazine. He is quite interested in his travelling companion opposite, there are others in that compartment who do not interest him.

" Would you like that window lifted ? " says John ; " it is quite close in here. I fear we'll have a storm."

" Please, John ! "

Quietly the man whispers " Gladys ! " as he opens the window.

Much they had to say one to the other, but it took a long time to come.

" John, are you as fond of flowers as you ever were ? "

" Yes, I think more so now than ever."

" You kept the rose, didn't you ? "

" Yes ! "

" Take these two pink carnations ; they are from the garden where I picked the rose."

The man for a moment looks upon the others, who almost invade his single right. Quietly he accepts the siege.

" How is my mother ? "

What a trip that was for him ! His heart was more than full. The way out he could not yet see ; already he had applied for an appointment promising so much. " Would she wait ? "

When they reached the station where refreshments were served, both told each other much that they had long reserved. During those years a regular correspondence had been kept up at sensible intervals. There had been no engagement, only a high mutual regard.

She knew of his return as well as others, and being in the city for a few days, naturally, she had hoped that it would be her who would meet him first. Again they re-enter the travelling compartment. He says : " Gladys, I owe so much to my God that the only way I can meet the bill

is to lay my few talents to His service. What I will receive in return may be very little indeed ; yet, hope never left me."

" John, your mother said to me the other day that you were a brave man."

" My mother was always loyal. It is well that she but knew the best in me, for this I owe to her. I come home rejoicing."

The compartment is not now so full, and the two sit side by side. Like brother and sister they converse.

" Is Gus doing well, now ? "

" Yes, in a worldly sense he is a successful man. He has all my father's estate to depend upon. But, I am sorry to say that he is still the same old Gus. He and his wife are happy enough together ; both have their own entertainers, neither of them make any special attachments. What I do not like about their home is this : the people you meet there are neither cordial nor genuinely friendly. I do not think that it troubles Gus very much, but his wife wants companionship."

Quietly the man beside her turns his soft grey eyes away for a few moments. Then, turning again to her, he means so much in the little he says :

“ That’s Gus ! ”

Her hand finds John’s wrist, and her plead is deep : “ You and Gus were always good friends, were you not ? ”

“ Gladys, I loved Gus. I spent many an evening with him, but he never spent one with me—he was awfully selfish.”

Those eyes tear-bepearled in the man’s face looked tenderly into another like pair : they understood.

Few knew that John Heathlyn’s first mistake was disloyalty to the institution wherein he earned his livelihood. Few knew how those within had suspected him of disloyalty, or the reason for the suspicion ; yet, had he not served his friends without with information he should have kept strictly to himself. Yes, Gus had benefited by John’s confidence in him, but no reciprocation was evident.

“ Well, little woman, we live and learn—a man should be upright in his actions, and downstraight in every conclusion. It is not right for any man to justify his acts by the salve of habit which any business pursuit suggests. Simply because a financial concern fails to advertise its weakness, it is not at all honorable in the servant

that he do it. This I did, Gladys—think of me as you like—I told Gus ; after he had hedged, others knew where it came from.”

“ John, but you forgive him, don’t you ? ”

“ Gladys, I have nothing in the world to forgive, I am only sorry that Gus is still so selfish. I love him. Maybe others will never forgive me ; anyway, my thoughtlessness at the time did little good, for, from what you tell me, Gus remains the same. Is the old place as attractive as ever ? ”

She saw that there was only a question to answer, so she refrained from tendering any sympathy to the man who had for seven years been very much misunderstood.

“ The old place is a little altered here and there. We have a few of the older generations living in the township as their married sons are occupying the old homesteads now. Your mother wears well. It is wonderful after all she has faced. Her home is sought by many true old friends—I never go there without meeting one of the dear folk who were companions with our parents in the early days.”

Each link of human association belonging

to the past comes into music room, or joins the happy gatherings in the social evenings, as man and woman in quiet succession lead other figures before the mental screens of memory. It did him good to have had her with him ; still, she is no more than friend—and this he thinks is better even than that she be named “ my wife.” From boy to man he sought for one in whom he could confide as friend. He knew a mother’s love, but there was much that even a man would rather not permit his mother ever share.

“ You two ! No one thought that you would be back for a few days.”

The sisters seize from the strong man’s hands the bags and wrappings. It was some time before the mother and her boy withdrew their true embrace.

“ Home ! Thank God ! ”

To the room he turns where things he years ago had handled, still remain. So neat is all, so clean, so sweet—yes, a little worn.

Days of ecstasy, nights of gloom in sequences came and went as he waited. At last he found that it was not wise to become introspectively inclined. Waiting

for appointment of such consequence, though, did make him honestly examine himself.

One night, after bidding all good-night, he turned to his room to read. After having read of Peter, he communed alone : “ Why was Peter thrice bid feed the flocks : were there some so weak that they knew not even the Father’s love ? Did some need to be fed upon the pasture lands where Christ had led ? Did some await the Spirit’s food of mystic fellowship ? ”

In quietness he turns his consciousness to Him who cares and watches while man sleeps. His prayer : “ The world is well with Thee, I thank Thee for Thy mercy.”

That was a great night. A hand quietly moves and points out a road to him—it is a dream :

Upon a well kept high-road with sweeping swards of closely growing green his feet are placed. On either side are well kept ways, no fence except a wall of stone, where a straying vine festoons to touch the green beneath ; sometimes a hedge of glory protects those softer anemones and hyacinths which share a place with ranunculi, rose and lily, in a lovely Oriental scene.

A group in softest flowing garb issue from beneath the branching grove of pomegranates which grace a path from door to opening in the fence of stone. They move towards a temple glowing with golden splendour; with kind enquiry, they scan the face of the pilgrim on the road above; their honest gaze his own withdraws from, as he furtively lets his glance fall upon the dust beneath. There at his feet lies a golden spoon, for a moment he hesitates to grasp it—procrastination—fatal hesitancy—he stoops at last to clutch the spoon, but another presence thrusts him away. Looking up, he stands alone, alone with disappointment.

Anxiously he presses on to where he knows not, there seems so much behind he would forget.

A little by-path meets his view. Down this he wanders carelessly until his ears become arrested with music, which issues from a lovely glade where youths and maidens bound by fairy garlands move in soft tread to a merry dance and mazy march. The pilgrim joins the throng in their sensuous pleasure—at last, the music stops—the companions are spirited away,

and a few faded flowers, crushed and broken, fall at his feet.

He moves away so discontented from the scene where once so much that seemed so bright did temporarily exist. Some creeping, trailing growths impede his steps. These he bruises with his feet until he finds a side-track once much used. On he goes, the day is nearly done, and evening finds him wearily wandering over a cobbled street. Between rare old buildings marked with age he wanders on. Before an arch of massive masonry he stays as others pass within and almost invite his company to attend. Low murmurs issue from the place within—he drops his eyes to the flags upon which he now stands, to see a silver spoon thereon. “Why ponder? Why hesitate?”—this he asks himself.

With uncertainty he stoops to grasp the thing—it vanishes from his touch—opportunity is again withdrawn.

In fear he turns; he almost races from those sober streets down squalid ways, until without the city, 'neath a lovely moon, he struggles on.

A road so little used; here and there upon either side a broken fence, a fallen

wall. Beside a cairn of well cut stones a tiny hut he sees, a quiet recluse peeps out and quickly withdraws. A bare-legged waif madly rushes after some wild thing through bramble, thistle, weed and bracken, where once a field of better things did grow. The road is rough, and ruts, now much eroded by years of storms, occasion a stumbling as the pilgrim wearies on. At last he has to stop, he knows not why. He looks about—upon a mound he sees the glint of a burnished iron spoon—this he quickly grasps. A voice in whisper says, “Your clammy hands will tarnish it; use that which others lent to thee: go, feed my sheep!”

Stumbling, falling, clutching fiercely a thing he dare not lose, he struggles on!

Through thorn and nettle, gorse and stone, fearfully gropes his way. Far on the horizon's edge he sees a cliff of rock, upon a ledge grim gates of iron brave are closed against the way.

Bleeding and torn he climbs and clings, he thrusts the limbs and branches apart and presses toward the goal.

The gates he reaches, nearly swooning as he grips their stern, cold bars. Quietly

it opens before he even makes his prayer. Old and venerable the attendant who bids him "Come within!" Lifting his bleeding hands which clutch the spoon, he tries to tell the story of his pilgrimage. The only thing he hears is another voice, his own refuses to appeal: "You failed! Now open wide your eyes and look!"

Look! Innumerable people busy in the fields, where all that this earth could provide was to every hand. The picture enlarged: myriad souls were actively engaged in mill and factory, mighty armies of men and women all happily fulfilling every necessary and obvious duty—a scene of perfect contentment.

In the very midst of this great and wonderful scene a transparent building of great magnitude supremely stands upon the rising ground. A row of chastely garbed figures stand upon its staired and terraced front with trumpets to the lips; one low, sweet sound strikes every ear, and tools are laid aside as every soul bends to a Mightiness unseen.

Look! One long procession of saintly forms with a golden emblem in their hands move by in glistening robes of white; then

comes another column great, of goodly souls who, garbed in softest hues, move by with a silver emblem in their hands ; behind, in sober homespun, come a group of strong and healthy beings who bear an emblem of iron bright. All pass within the majestic pile. Chants of praise in great acclaim swell from that congregation and issues to those who bend the knee without. The service done, those who had softly wound their introit from their trumps, lead in recessional pæan, while saints in white bear lilies fair, and those in softened light a myrtle twig before the greater crowd who hold on high a briar sweet.

“ Seest thou it all ? ”

The whispered voice again commands : “ Move on ! ” He steps forward with his eyes fixed upon the glorious scene. He slips, then slides continuously—its terrible monotony frightens him. He prays that all should stop ; the only answer to his often repeated prayer was : “ Glide on ! Glide on ! ”

John Heathlyn awakes, the morning light like water into the hold of sinking ship gushing in through the window with the unlowered blinds. Casting aside the

clothes which grace his couch, he rises to his feet.

That morning he received orders from the front.

"Mother, dear, you are pleased, are you not? I will now go forward."

"No one more pleased, my son."

Another seven years pass quickly by; at home he is again. Many his experiences in many fields, but now he hopes to labour nearer home.

Again he awaits orders for the work much closer to all that on earth which makes life here of worth.

CHAPTER III

“ PLACE AND PEOPLE ”

WHEN John Heathlyn interviewed the director of mission affairs, he went away much encouraged, though he knew perfectly well that the district to which he was appointed was anything but an easy place to satisfy, and much more would be expected than it was likely he would be able to fulfil.

Others also helped him to understand both people and place in fair light, and his letters to those at home contained the following very interesting early impressions :

“ You would enjoy a few days up here in the forest on this mountain range. Here, the scene of interesting settler life ever displays an accompaniment of true contentedness of spirit, and hazardous adventure is common enough. Here, true manhood

fight great physical battles against the liberty of life to make room for himself. Many a victory is deferred, yet man persistently continues until it is gained.”

“ Chatting to one of our oldest settlers the other day, he said : ‘ It is now a little more than two decades since the Victorian Government, upon the importunacy of the earlier settlers of the Western District, decided to throw the Otway Forest open for selection. It has always been admitted that this was one of the sad mistakes any colonial administration is likely to make. And yet, the fault is not directly their own, for, very often those lesser governing bodies, locally placed, have used their influence to sway the minds of those whose minds ought to be more closely occupied with greater and weightier affairs of consequence to future generations ; but, unfortunately, the parochial sop counts for a lot.’ ”

“ You will remember, Mother dear, that our young colony was passing through a grave and fierce financial crisis, our larger towns and cities were feeling the fever of centralized congestion, and every likely field was graciously thrown open as avenues to relieve the city of its living burden ;

though, very few indeed who were denizens of this or that city became selectors of these vast primeval domains. Only stalwarts faced this frontier, where nature had for centuries with mighty tree growths held right of occupancy. The men who entered here were mostly the sons of those men whose earlier ardent pioneering spirit had done much towards building up that which is a great part of Victoria's vast agricultural areas. Some few themselves are here from the drought frontiers of the Mallee, having met disappointment so common in the days before the system of irrigation was brought about, or artificial fertilization was introduced."

"Men, aye, faithful stalwarts deserving of almost any nameable patrimony, with worthy hardihood have more than once struck out to establish themselves, and build an estate to leave behind for any worthy offspring."

In a letter to his mother, he says :

"Would you believe it, a mother said to me : 'Twenty-four years ago I came along with my good man to share his house and labour. It has been a great experience, sir. I brought along one baby ; since then

six others blessed us. He who gave was with my man and beside me, through those great days : mighty days of success. What health He lent. Look at those great lads and lasses, who all in turn took their share of life's burdens.'

“ I think the forests here must be very like the country that you told me of in Gippsland, Mother. The might, beauty and grandeur of the forest here is not yet all a thing of the past ; there is a silent dignity about these benign sentinel giants even, which stand charred and stripped of their bark in posthumous piles awaiting and meekly submitting to a slow process of decay. The trunks of blue-gum, black-butt, messmate, and mountain-ash are colossal. Beech, box, and blackwood testify to the value of that mother earth from which that tiny life of seed had such material drawn : much is still held in wonderful preservation. The great remnant of this forest which seems to jealously guard the mountain's buttresses will no doubt build bulwarks of utility, and the valuable furniture woods are adornments for any home, no matter how ornate.”

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The day Heathlyn entered his work in this field he met fellow travellers who afterwards came much into his everyday experiences.

“ As the crow flies ” the terminus is but very few miles from a centre of much changing interest ; yet, as the narrow-gauge railway line describes the distance in its spiral ascent, it numbers a mileage at thrice that length. To some the journey is very wearying, to others a rest, while many think that the destination is only too soon reached.

After you cross the river the climb is perpetual and the train describes many horseshoe curves. The throbbing heart of the engine only finds sympathy in those echoes which vibrantly answer through the gorges in harmony with a repetition of regular pulsations which effort produces Throb, throb ! The verdure-clad hills let drop their tears as the harnessed element of water steadily and patiently plods along the upward way. Sequence upon sequence of hill-terraces are thus essayed. The iron body, of itself immobile, surmounts those diorite buttresses which contain its given strength. What a sigh of release escapes the

valves when a station or siding permits the panting engine regain her breath !

One thousand eight hundred feet altitude to be climbed before the traveller can see the sterner walls which tower above the Southern Ocean which laves its beaches.

Every train is interesting. Every freight is more or less so. But there is that to be found in the country voyageer which commands more than our passing interest.

Your travelling companion likes to be entertaining and social, conversation is always in the happy vein ; and, the much travelled man is not tired of pointing out spots of interest.

In the city trains we find people in such a hurry or flutter, with so many interests that they really do not notice the things of importance to others beside themselves. No sooner does the maid or man bound for the city enter the suburban train than his hand unfolds the leaf of book or periodical ; nearly always, the man fills his pipe. At times an animated argument is indulged over football, cricket, or races, when politics have to be carefully eschewed.

The man who helps build the city. The

man who to reach that city pays the greater fare. This man and his wife are intensely occupied in all that which spells for national progress and material comfort—these sort of people truly enjoy their pleasures of life, for the pleasures do not enslave them.

A quiet, though strong looking man is sitting in the corner of the mixed compartment of the corridor car close up to the partition which separates the smokers. He occasionally joins the chat with the lady immediately beside him, and never lapses into silence until he has found out something of the place he is going to, which is worthy of ruminating upon.

John Heathlyn it is, on his way to the front, proud as a sentinel—he feels the dignity of his position. Watchman, he has been appointed ; is he not responsible for the sleeping camp ? They may go to sleep down at head-quarters, but he must be ever vigilant and courageous, for there is Another to whom he must give answer when he seeks reward.

Quietly he is studying the lay of the land. He knows his orders fairly well ; these he repeats to himself as new suggestions arise through thought gained by

contact with the good folk who journey with him.

In that same compartment is a slim splinter of a man; he looks quite a youth, though the face is wizened and drawn. Quick grey eyes with first an assertively furtive searching glance sweep the face of the one whom he is engaged in conversation with. If the owner—Charley Crumbles—finds an invitation in the opposite eyes, those grey keen ones of his lose their furtive custom, but confidently drink in more than that which one can say.

Above those eyes a full, square forehead rested in an opossum-skin cap. You generally find this type selling race-cards and holding a regular paper stand in the city. Night comes with its soft mantle to veil the entrance of the right-of-way where these units of the race slip quietly in at a back door to a modest abode. Those grey eyes very often had to find for their owners any little want without the aid of artificial light. Those same mirrors of the soul brought much to thought from the waters of life; few books of entertainment were indulged, but human faces lived in the corridors of memory's libraries. These are

the lives which give evidence of that which is truly the spirit of the times—they are not waifs exactly : they are ever ready to minister to the wants of others and enjoy a liberty of conscience that many would envy.

Charley was always a facetious, philosophic lad. The police who behaved agreeably found a companion in this manly denizen of the city, and now we find him fulfilling a commission for the brother of one who was drawn to him when first they met.

Mr. Hyland made no mistake in his choice of a useful farm-hand. The city youth became the country man : he not only enjoyed the life immensely, but he made others see in it much that they would have missed.

He is now addressing himself to a dentist, who always took a great interest in the people of the settlement.

“Luber and his wife came along that track twenty-five years ago. They were almost new to the country. He was driving a pair of horses hitched to an old yankee-wagon—the pole broke just as they were struggling up that hill, somehow or other

the horses got free, and the wagon emptied its load in the creek. Mrs. Lubber was quite upset.

“ For two days Lubber laboured carrying his goods to the top and fixing up the new pole. When he finally reached his selection, he said : ‘ I more than once thought of turning back, now we must settle down.’ I think that it would take more than a yankee-wagon to carry all he owns out ! ”

Stiff grades even on the railroad, yet in retrospect we see the state surveyors loyally fulfilling arduous days, ungrudgingly giving the best of their time and strength to explore and mark out these mountain labyrinths for others. They had to climb and scale over many slippery steeps and wade as many marshy basins in their effort to map out selections for homes of those who were waiting to follow. Town sites had to be preserved for the less venturesome, who come to share in their fellows’ proven success.

Few truly recognize, to appreciate the value of that pioneer, that guide who charted out so many miles of virgin country as he cut his way through places where others would fear to tread. These good

servants of the state were satisfied with but scanty remuneration, and many months rolled by in that willing retirement and loneliness where only retreating animal life once found safe sanctuary.

“What!” says a bearded man with a saddle between his knees. “Think that steep, do you? Why, I have a cattle-pad behind my house where the snakes tie a knot with their tail about a piece of bark to brake the journey!”

“Well,” said Heathlyn, “things are fairly abrupt about here, anyway. I hope the people will prove all right!”

This little aside brightened up everybody. Each had something of interest to tell. One lady was quite interesting indeed when she related the following story: ‘My friend Mrs. Colin kept turkeys, and they used to roost in a tree on the edge of the hill. She could never make out how it was that they began to disappear, so she watched right through the night; and, says she, ‘If those birds flew from the tree down the hill they were never able to climb back.’”

After this there was a little quietness until Charley Crumbles drew everybody’s attention to a silver-box sapling which but

recently had been stripped of a tenaciously clinging clematis or blue-pod.

“ Do you see the rings upon the bark of that sapling ? ”

Everyone apparently acquiesced, so the narrator, with a sadly whimsical expression, went on :

“ One day when it was very slippery the old black snake’s missus took a turn round that stick. She felt run-down—this is a state which ladies very often now-a-days feel, I believe. Anyway, she was at the time imagining all sorts of things, everything seemed to be slipping from under her. Strange to relate, Bill Rafferty was coming up from Banool with his team of bullocks at this precise moment. Bill has a remarkable number of quaint expressions at his command, and when he is in good form his recitations are very weird. I am sure if you heard him at his best, as Mrs. Blackie did, you would not wonder at even a snake holding on to things a bit tightly. No doubt she thought that Otway Forest was about to be taken from us ; anyway, she clutched the sapling so desperately that the marks are there yet. Now when she passes that way with the children she always

thinks of Bill—she doesn't like him. I think it is mutual ; though twice Bill made approaches, she very gently withdrew."

Heathlyn arises and quietly sits down beside Charley, who is now quite the centre of attraction. Charley moves up to make room, and in a droll way says, " You're the man who ran over from the Melbourne-train platform to catch this rapid going rattler, weren't you ? "

" Yes, I understood that I was a little behind time ! "

" Never think it again ; that is, if you are quick enough, for, I am sure that you would have caught it if you had left ten minutes late."

" I quite believe it would be possible if I was quick enough ! "

" It seems to me, sir," says Crumbles, " that you and I met before ? "

There was something about Heathlyn which made you imagine that you had met him before ; but, when you penetrated to the inner workings of that mind of his you met a stranger. The disappointment sometimes was quite a refreshing pleasure, and Crumbles drew nearer to him the longer he conversed with him.

Heathlyn introduced himself after Crumbles had asked him, was he the vermin inspector.

“ No, I am a shepherd, and my name is Heathlyn. I am expecting to find that the sheep are a little scattered.”

“ Well, sir, I am milking up at Hyland’s. He is a good sort of boss, but we do not trouble about sheep now ; the last one we had was that wild that it scattered our friends for awhile. We lost him, and when he turned up, seven other selectors came along and said that he was theirs. Anyway, during the argument he jumped out of the cow-yard, and the other fellows always think that Hyland let him go. I am sure any stranger is welcome to him.”

“ I did not mean to joke with you. I am appointed to this district as its missionary.”

“ I am glad to meet you, then, and you will find Crumbles ready to help you over the roads. Your sheep, you will find, travel very slowly on these boggy tracks, and the hills do not suggest rest after you are facing them every day in the week—the folk look straight up for their help : they get it.”

“ I suppose that the rabbits are now giving the settlers a good deal of trouble ? Are there any in here ? ”

“ The papers say that it is too wet for them—they ought to know. There’s hardly a place now-a-days that you will not find a paper. They might be right in their way of thinking, for last year we had only one hundred and one inches of rain, without counting the drippings from the clouds which condensed overnight on the tree-butts and foliage.”

“ Then you think that it is too wet for them, Mr. Crumbles ? ”

“ Charley Crumbles up here, sir—even the rabbits know me better that way. As for the paper folk, they don’t know everything ; that’s what I think the rabbits think.”

“ So you have a few ? ”

“ Two years ago I was selling papers in Melbourne ; generally known then as The Twister. Well, amongst the papers which I persuaded people to buy was ‘ The Farmer’s Friend.’ My boss bought one the day we became introduced ; he and I came along a few days later up here, and we shared the same experiences with the rabbits.”

“ Then you have some sport ? ”

“ Maybe, maybe not. I remember the last ‘ Farmer’s Friend ’ we got, and how it told us that if we were sowing a couple of acres of oats and a chain of rye-grass all around that the rabbits would not go beyond the grass. Cannot make out how they reached the oats—we got none ; but the rye-grass did not look as if it was much hurt. Anyway, the rabbits seem to have become as attached to that place as myself—they’ve made more than a hole in the ground.”

As the last pinch is being negotiated, the passengers begin delving under the seats for his or her belongings. It takes quite some time to sort out the many and various ones in this collection of heterogeneous miscellany which now occupies the floor of this one-classed and unracked railway corridor-coach. Yet, the people are happier in it than those in the indulgently furnished suburban trains, for it is only the bagman who finds anything to complain about. The Government Administrators meagrely dispense grants to these hardy and self-reliant settlers. No Immigration Bureau is at hand to lend help. No Water Com-

mission goes to the trouble to waste public funds on lucerne holdings. Many men in this forest proved that that which they had to sell for seven pounds an acre cost them twenty to occupy.

“What a jolt!”

Not only the jolt which arouses all, but the buffers from intention to extension for a few seconds crush the rising passengers this way, then that.

“Is this ‘The Ridge’? It looks as wet and uninviting as ever. Here! Are you the driver from the hotel? Obtain my things from the van.” Thus the commercial traveller arrives, and still pulling away at the end of a cigar, with hands deep in his pockets, he strolls about until all his things are lifted, and himself safely ensconced in a rug at the back.

All had to alight in a cloud. One great soft envelope enshrouds everybody and everything; even the great black-butt stump at the station gates is hardly seen. Two years later the stump was removed for seven pounds at a dead loss to the two good bushmen who tendered for the job.

An honest pang of regret stirs in the heart of the man who can truly appreciate

the beauty of nature. Here is to be viewed the evidence of ruthless destruction, witness it in the charred ends which once stood in noble and natural glory. Here, once in sublime magnificence, a forest of great value reigned ; now, it is overthrown, and which by right of place should have remained to edify, is in remnants of decay. Only an infinitesimal portion was adapted to man's use. Diverted, thwarted, preyed upon ; not altogether, but often entirely destroyed improvidently, extravagantly, in thoughtless prodigality. Hard indeed to understand that man who lives to conquer, never truly realizes this aim until he sees he conquers himself.

Crumbles parts with Heathlyn, telling him that the hotel at the other end of the town is as snug a corner and as comfortable hotel as any in or out of the city.

“ The chap who keeps that pub up there is no common sort, let me tell you. Twelve years ago he managed to introduce a school-teacher ; to encourage the children to come regularly his wife used to supply them all with a hot meal in the middle of the day—this was long before he took the pub.

“ To encourage the poor government he gave to the education department two acres of his best land for a school-site—see it down there, that pretty little plateau above the water-wheel. The hungry railway-standing-committee were pleased to accept a slice of seventeen acres of land for a station-site. Not a bad piece, is it ? Great home-ruler, mind you ; the only man up here who voted against a federal government. Rafferty came in the morning after the election into the bar, and said, ‘ That there vote agin’ the goverment was mine ! ’ The chap at the pub says, ‘ Think we better order another count ! ’ The cab is waiting for you. If you ask the carter at the store he will run your trunk up for you, or I will tell Mr. Hyland in the morning. I hope you find us all right ! ”

“ Good-bye, Crumbles ; there is one man, I believe, who will help me see the folk as I should.”

Everybody moved slowly and with deliberation, even to hesitation ; nobody seemed to be in a hurry. Slippery paths up steep hills make people measure their strides and regulate their habits. How carefully the big man with his city papers

picks his way. Entering a gate opposite, he stops to wipe his feet upon a tussock of fog near the fence ; then, before stepping on to the verandah, he scratches for awhile upon a bag ; at last he reaches the door, where the final deposit is made.

Over the much disturbed road, where some loose pieces of metal sometimes come to the surface, the hotel cab is lumbering along. The wheel suddenly drops into a hole at one side, and Heathlyn is made to look out of the back.

“ Who the deuce is that fellow, my dear ? ” says the big man to his wife, who meets him at the door.

“ Now, how upon earth am I to know everybody ? Why ask a woman who is never able to get outside the house, except of necessity to church, I’d like to know ? ”

“ The reason I asked you, was because I was wondering if he is the new doctor that the lodges were in correspondence with. Anyway, it does not matter much ; he is here to stay by the look of his luggage.”

A pair of honest blue eyes are at the hill-top awaiting the arrival of the cab. Heathlyn, springing to the ground, hands his handbag to the owner of those sapphire

seas. "Can you put the Bush Missionary up for a day or two?"

"We have had to put up with many of those sort of creatures; the majority were harmless."

"Thank you. I trust that I will never be in any way classed harmless; yet I hope to prove myself an agreeable sort of creature."

"Follow me, then, and don't forget to close the door after you: it is necessary to keep the damp fogs out."

"Must I be led by the place's suggestions, or the people's wants, Miss Bland?"

"What I say is this: Keep your sheets dry, it is pleasanter sailing; always lead your flock on deck, do not drive them; so environ them that they will never be able to see a way out without you."

"I am sure I will like you all."

"Thank you! Up here it is the safest thing to do, or at least to say. You can have this room as long as you remain with us. The last missionary got so fond of it, that he was seldom away from it; we were wondering would it have to go away with him. It is quite private, for this part of the house is kept exclusively for our best

boarders. I aired the sheets this morning, they so quickly become damp and clammy.”

“ I have come from a home where I am afraid that too much was done for me, and no doubt will expect too much.”

“ Are you married ? Did you come from Melbourne ? The last missionary thought that this was no place to bring a wife. A good number of the people thought that he had found one here, but I do not think that he thought so. He is up in the Mallee now, dodging as many north winds, with those fine dust-storms, as he can. He corresponds with mother, so we will be able to tell him all you do, which he thought of doing.”

“ I have not told you anything about myself. I wonder will you ever truly know. This I will tell you : I am not married, but recently in the city I met a lady who has a great influence over me.”

“ I will leave you now to settle down, and come in to mother’s sitting-room after you feel rested. Mother belongs to your church.”

The evening was very agreeably passed in the parlour, where a commercial traveller and Heathlyn debated the question of

peopling the Northern Territory with young Christian Chinese especially trained to accept British Administration. They became quite agreed on the following points : First, that no race showed the peaceful characteristic in such a patent virtue as they did. The second agreement was, that the Chinese were not likely to become an idle people if the country responded to their primary efforts.

Next morning Heathlyn strolled up the street and stood outside the store watching the mail-coach loading up.

Smart the driver was now seated in this queer looking vehicle. He had disposed of the parcels more carefully than the passengers, and the mails were occupying every available corner. Hitched in the lead were two smart-looking ponies, while leaning on the pole were two well-tried, rest-deserving sort of horses, which hanged their heads dejectedly through the collars, so fastened to the pole to help them keep their feet.

“ Good-morning, sir ; quite a nice day overhead ! This is the country for aerial navigation ; the boy at the stables tells me that you are the agent for such trips. Though, to tell you the truth, I would

rather be mud-bespangled than wind-befangled. This chariot carries His Royal Nib's mail ; never seen him down these parts, and I don't know anyone as corresponds with him. One thing I know, he is a good pay ; always has the cheque waiting at the month end.”

“ There is neither an earthly mark nor a part of doubtful strength in the chariot which carries souls away from earth—it is not seen, indeed, but we believe that the vessel has but One Pilot who is prepared to deliver all at an eternal destination of happiness.”

One quick turn of the wrist, and a sixteen-foot thong with rapid transition cracks, as Smart, with a “ See you again ! Cheer up, my ponies ! ” moves off in this dingy looking, mud - besmattered conveyance which has to face eleven miles of corduroy-road out of a journey of little more than twenty-three miles ; and this, to occupy nine hours.

Last Saturday was pay-day at the Railway Construction Camp, and two or three men are still uncertainly moving about between the wine-hall and the hotel. Bland is chagrined ; he will sell drink, but

he objects to having befoozled sleepers on his verandah.

Nearly every day fresh batches were arriving from the city to work upon the railway extension; two out of every three within a fortnight returned. Sometimes three for every two during the wet spells turned their faces citywards, for it was impossible to earn during broken-time a wage sufficient to keep a distant home going.

Just turning up the hill is Crumbles, with his feet poised upon the ends of the sledge-rails.

“Pleased to see you,” says Heathlyn.

“Not every day that the boss tries to kill the lean calf, sir! If you intend crossing the road up there by the store, I would advise you to put heavier boots on and tread softly: that is where Rafferty lost his first team of bullocks, and horns are not the most pleasant things to feel yourself upon.”

“Thank you, Crumbles. What brings you along this morning?”

“Sledged in the cream this morning. Some of the skim-fed poddies were sick. Mr. Hyland gave them some medicine in

mistake. You know the carbide you put in bicycle lamps? Well, this was in a tin like the cattle powder canister. My! a dessert-spoonful livened them up; never saw a better steeple-chase in my life—the red chap had not stopped when I left. I must hurry up and get the stuff from the doctor.”

Heathlyn was drawn to this young man; he felt he had a friend in him.

“ Do the fellows drink heavily up here? ”

“ Well, some drink as much up here as they do in other camps. The policeman found Curley Crisp lying out full length last Sunday on the railway line; he pushed him with his foot, saying, ‘ Men should not be crawling things; men were given two feet to walk with, but what sort of man are you—you want six feet along the ground? ’ ”

“ There’s Curley now! ”

“ Wa-toh, Curley! Time you crept back to camp. The old blue and white taught you how to bend to slops.”

“ Curley is not a bad sort, Mr. Heathlyn. He used to play the game of the forty. My! couldn’t he kick and handle the ball;

now he can't handle himself, as he is kicked about in these railway teams. Does a couple of weeks' hard yakker, then a few days' liquid refreshment."

"Crumbles, could you spare a minute to introduce me to your friend?"

"All right, sir. If you fetch him for our lodge I vote that you deserve more than a Royal Society medal."

"Curley, let's introduce you to a bloke from town. I think he has something in his kit that will quench the thirst."

"My name is Heathlyn, Mr. Crisp, and I hope that we will become staunch friends. I remember you when you played the game. You used to run straight through the enemies' lines, seldom you missed the goal. You always treated everybody fairly; try and treat yourself as generously—play the game!"

"Say nothing!"

"Good-morning to you both. I hope that you will always throw a stone on my thatch if I pass by."

CHAPTER IV

THE OUTRIDER'S REFLECTIONS

SUCH a silence of peace is evident, yet their seems to be a gamut waiting to echo the twitter of the wren ; sometimes it harshly vibrates as the coarser note of cockatoo disturbs the quiet harmony.

Did you ever, with day breaking, stand upon the great ploughed fields of our wheatlands, and hear the sweet music arise as the soft rays of the rising sun touched earth's surface in furrows broken ? Here it is that you can hear music, music never yet translated to artificial adaptation. Sounds truly interpreting that perfect harmony of concord, that reference to something innate in man inspires holy thoughts. This is not imagination, for this subtle song awakens in man feelings of which he cannot help but know are belonging to a memory touched and charmed in those generations past.

Man is ever sensible of all that which is physically magnificent. What else bids art to so lovingly try and portray? Nature silently and eloquently petitions and inspires the soul of man to symbolize, that others share the pleasures revealed to some.

It is only the church's outrider who draws the rein of his horse; his own reins, seized and held as he gazes in simple but pensive adoration. Verily he drinks in life from that expression of the Creator's power which now enthrals him. His soul through body's sensibility admits each psychic touch of form, be it fragrance, or, in unseen vehicle quickening other faculty of consciousness; all, all he knows by reference of light that is but his to use.

In obeisance man marks in all the clustering foliage, growth of tree and plant, a law obeyed. Tiny husk had burst with strengths unknown to reach the light, from frond to stem, from stem to branch, from branch to limb, from limb to twig which let the foliage through to protect the coloured petals of the flower which heralded to gathering insect stores of sweetnesses found where only tree in root could find.

Oh, richness indeed! the golden pollen

lent to insect limbs ; a wealth dispensed, that fruit fair flavoured, may itself refresh a likened tiny life its kind, to thus again perpetuate—in this : invisible !

So quietly does another rider come along the soft topped corduroy that the outrider does not notice the even pad of the unshod hoof.

“ You seem deeply impressed, Mr. Heathlyn ? ”

“ It's you, Fisher. You do not intrude, though your address for a moment disturbed me. I really wanted someone to come along. Man's quest upon earth has been a long one ; still, nature reserves much that the intelligence of man has in himself reserved, which will some day come to the quickening.”

“ Sir, you are right ! Revelation is that which has ever been ; yet, not to man of necessity known. I think that there is more in continuance than in the idea evolution. What I mean is this—nothing is new, man of necessity takes from the greater that which he can in proven quantities best apply. And being inspired, he is able not only to reflect and project his ideals, but by the genius of application

bring his reflections through inventive limitations to a thing of utility."

"Fisher, you came along in the train the day I entered this field. You can hardly imagine how interested I was in all you folk that day. Now I am more than interested, I'm influenced."

"The city waif seemed to hold the floor a good deal, and yet he is not in any way presumptuous; I hope that you never thought Charley Crumbles other than facetiously natural?"

"No, indeed, Fisher! It has been more than my pleasure to again enjoy his humour. He is a dual personality beautifully fused; his expressions always leave you thinking."

"Do you not believe that man is more than a dual personality? His very non-conformity to this or that type often suggests conformity to many in fragmentary degrees."

"Yes, vocation, for instance, is a hard thing to explain in itself, but still, there are people very specially meant to fill certain places; though it would be an impossibility to trace these beginnings."

"Mr. Heathlyn, you believe that in the

general plan of things all creatures are predestined ? ”

“ Yes, and the soul that is fired by the love of God is never slow in making his acknowledgment ; but the soul which is hurt by the element of selfishness finds service of a temporary nature with a Spirit who loves to engage those who imagine that they are pleasing themselves.”

“ You believe that there exists external to man a personal spirit of evil ? ”

“ Fisher, I know by all that is evil in me that a spirit of evil did enter into man—this personality in me is ever at war with another distinct personality. As surely as the body is the sensible medium to the soul, so surely is the soul able to entertain two distinct arbiters to prove their sensible value ; these would depend upon rationalism if it were not for an occasional interference through the Spirit which is in man. Man may become subject to a formidable state of rationalism which silences the two arbiters ; he may train himself to such an intellectualism that his intellect is his law ; he may refuse the light of revelation ; he may so depend upon tradition that fresh consciousness will never again assert itself,

and stoically he will submit all at the very time he imagines he is controlling himself. Man true to nature should turn with that state of consciousness which he knows is best to his service ; or else, the opposite dictate will hold him—that of being in service, a puppet, only sagaciously directed for temporal ends.”

“ Then you think that there are some lives distinctly purposeless, and purposely so ? ”

“ It would be a great blow to the man who had for years been steeping himself in the learning of the age to wake up to the fact that his mind was not his own, but a heterogeneous combination of minds. Such mechanical minds do exist, and it would be hard for some men to prove their belief in anything without quoting others to their support : this loss of consciousness of the true self is that which you see in—conformity to many. Popular opinion is not always right ; if it was, there would be no need for the distinct personality to come along to reform. Let us thank Him who knows best, for He appeals to man’s sensibility, and would dictate terms to conscience, while the spirit that is external to

man does never appeal to the dual personality, but actually withdraws the very consciousness of the knowledge of all that evil is. Yes, there is in the world a union with God ; and, where this union is real, man feels dependence ; but, where there is no such union man imagines his independence, and is subject to circumstance."

"Then I am right in believing that conscience is a gain, that first man did permit the spirit of evil enter into him, that he knows good from evil, not good and evil."

"So I would teach ; if it is worth anything at all—this life of ours—it is worth experimenting. Not that we should permit others experimenting with it for us ; not that we should permit both good and evil to at distinct seasons command it ; but that we see it something meant for a state of being beyond this condition, then I am sure that good would conquer."

"Without doubt, Mr. Heathlyn. We very soon learn that man is not conquering the world, and that every experience varies and memory wants readjustment ; therefore, the man who imagines that man's salvation is secured through rationalism

is lost, for reason itself waits for inspiration—from whom does this come ? ”

“ Let us imagine a man adrift in a canoe without his paddle. Just when passing the first rapids his paddle-set went overboard—he is quickly drawing near the falls and begins to swirl in the currents’ fiercer effort—with all his experiences he knows that his safety is best assured by sticking to the little bark which carries him ; no matter how he reasons there is nothing left to him but the knowledge of experience—life he knows is not his but to use. Like a hard fact something strikes the threatened vessel which still conducts him, a quick volition from him to that without, grasps this something—it is the lost paddle ; now he can use both human strength and reason.”

“ Sir, fatalism is a morbid fancy and mortalism is ruin. In this age no life should be without purpose, no bloom should waste its sweetness ; every one has an opportunity to humbly blush before an appreciative number of witnesses—no man should be chained to circumstance ! ”

“ Fisher, do not permit me bore you ! ”

“ Indeed, sir, you direct my thoughts to pleasant places.”

“ Well, I will tell you of a vision I had one day when preaching in a little shingle school-house about five miles from here. The setting is in another land at a period long gone by. An armourer is waiting upon his master, who is a great warrior king. Before this master he lays a suit of superb chain-mail. This, the king takes, permitting the maker adjust and fit it for him ; with pride the servile attendant places the shining helmet on the king’s head, drawing down the vizor. Lifting the vizor, for a moment the king hesitates—he had almost unbared in honour before a slave ; yes, he honours a slave as he addresses an assembled audience in eulogy of the weaker-vessel’s product. Says the king : ‘ Proud I am, yet not so proud as he who parts with that which cost him much this temporary honour to gain. Within this mail others’ shafts and darts may make entry for a moment and leave a sting, but he who parteth with that which is best, needs must labour long to again present another of its kind, and those days fired by true ambition now are passed, for glory here is quickly gained, as quickly lost ; therefore, I beg you witness of this life—that glory best is found by

those who truly strive to gain reward unseen by others, yet truly felt within."

"Grand, sir, but is there no sequel?"

"That there is.—Days pass days, the slave is found hard at his work; the state brings much to his ample forge—here, links of might and strength he makes, but none of attractiveness. Laboriously he welds each link, one link per day—day's bitter daily effort, day to day—the chain so grim itself lets fall a glowing link upon the anvil's face, a blow descends and fast becomes attached the red-hot thing; in frenzy now he lifts the chain, which makes a circle of his girth as other end falls over that which to the anvil clings—now so near his work he grasps a hammer with a handle short, and rains upon it many hurried blows—enchained; and thus, to vocation all is so helplessly renounced."

"Thank you! I like it all—how often we see men fail because they make up their mind instead of permit their minds become perpetually mirrors to reflect visions of warning and encouragement."

"There is more we will know, Fisher: there is much we know which we will not admit. There are many vain puppets who

are the offsprings of circumstance ; the spears their fathers wore hang in the halls which environ them—the butler, the house-keeper, the tutor, the agent keep those spurs burnished very often. The day will come when hosts of ghosts will appear, a mighty seance moves past the bed-head of the dying giant who preyed upon another's weakness."

" Oh, here comes Charley Crumbles. There is a sale at The Colac Tree to-day ; no doubt he is thither bound."

" Good-bye, Fisher ; it is pleasant company up here with nature. How much we owe to all that which is even a material revelation ; nature never has to borrow anything from art."

" It is a liberty of praise, I live in it, I love it : yet, try crush its beauty, my puny strength is levelled against it with all that others in their experiences have lent me to its overthrow. Yes, I live in it while its glory fades, languishes, vanishes before man's will. My turn off is but a few long logs' lengths from here. One massive pile shorn of bark and twig stands commandingly in its height of over one hundred and fifty feet. This must go to the invisible

some day from its present state of usefulness ; it shares the trust of keeping one end of my slip-rails up, while on their opposite end a greater green stem awaits the ruthless axe of that which rings and lets the sap expend the life—the soul.”

“ Fisher, it is a sin in which man craves for pity : all that which is of utility in its beauty is being destroyed, its sentient creatures pass from these their native haunts, the disciplinary reptile follows in silent procession.”

“ Well, Crumbles, I am glad that I will have your company ; at the same time I regret that our friend Mr. Fisher finds it necessary to leave us.”

“ So am I, Mr. Heathlyn, but the country calls. Mr. Fisher is loyal to the state ; he would rather prove an anomaly than fail in his bond.”

“ What do you mean, Charley ? You may be right in your opinion. Mr. Heathlyn and I have much in common, so be careful and don't include him ! ”

“ This is what I mean. The Lands Department direct that a man shall improve his holding. Do you honestly think that you will ever see that which God gave

improved upon by man ? There are areas which wait man's agency, but I do not know the man who would be patient enough to even wait for such a result as the Creator could alone bring about."

"There I am sure we all quite agree. Here, on the other hand, for man is this distinct command given—Subdue the earth. Have dominion over its creatures."

"I think, Fisher, that Crumbles will say with me that total annihilation leaves little room for a perfect fulfilment of the law."

"I will admit that the same command is accompanied by these words : Replenish it ! and The creatures are for use. Nevertheless, this forest contains many great-hearted men : men who have spent much effort in this wilderness of mazes. Here the best virtues must be active—the settler conducts every operation temperately and courageously ; he faces every physical opposition with patience and persistence. Here, time and endurance are justly measured—man is not put in the scales by his fellow or a union and sold in the open courts at a fixed price—man finds his value not only in that which he accomplishes, but in that which he himself can appreciate.

Necessity is the prompter ; with this, hope will not flicker nor fade—and necessity says—The earth is cursed for your sakes, and labour rewardeth.”

“ Look, both of you, earth’s best soil nourished that great charred tree, yet nature herself during the terrible fires of fifty-four seared its bark and left those topmost branches helpless—dead. How beautifully in relief those fronds of the fern with serrated edges stand out from that which is black and grim—this lower char caused but a year or two ago ; look, look at the little purple-pod with its drooping tear—a tear for sin in all its ruthlessness.”

“ It is for man to conquer, sir : the worthiest foe is that which first commands our admiration ; though I admit that contempt will never dissipate that which grows apace and bids for trials of strength—for contempt is that which conquers all.”

“ So it is, Fisher—a man likes a worthy foe, and the man proves his own worth who finds that he is able to sustain his prowess.”

“ Gentlemen,” says Crumbles, “ it is well for us that contrasts exist, and that contrasts attract. Even that gnarled and

distorted old beech trunk is graced by the companionship of those soft and quickly fading lichens, which enhance the tint of the greater tree's glory."

"Why, Crumbles, we are all becoming quite influenced by the same spirit."

"Good-bye, Fisher! I will find your slip-rails some day. To-night I have a service the other side of the heathlands."

"Good-luck, both of you!"

Fisher moves off leisurely through the mud which covers the track past his selection—it is from a foot to two feet deep,—while Crumbles and Heathlyn trot their horses over the dry planks upon the main-road.

"There's Doolan's, Mr. Heathlyn. The scrub is getting that thick down there that in a day or two he will not hear the dog bark when it is rounding up the bullocks. Things are not going too well with him; everybody likes to see things going ahead, but there are some things ahead of Doolan. He earns more money than the most of his neighbours. He takes thousands more shingles off at the station than anyone else, yet, he says when he reaches the pub—'I don't like to take a shingle off!'"

This pair, drawn from two distinct phases of society, chat on as if they had been old school chums.

“Mr. Heathlyn, those trees are hard to climb, and it is not the easiest thing to reach the top with your eyes—it takes at least three looks.”

Heathlyn reined in his horse and inclined his head with an upward glance. Placing his hand upon the saddle’s rim, he again extends his upward scope, again he throws his head right back to let his eye reach the top.

“You are right, Crumbles. I am sure that my first glance touched one hundred feet; then, I did not even see the branch of that fine tree. My next look found me about one hundred and fifty feet, a little below the first limit; certainly the third lent the sky to my field. It is not wise to take things too casually!”

About twenty minutes later the two part company, Crumbles to the sale and Heathlyn to the settlement over the Gellibrand River.

“I will be back in time for Cavendish’s lecture, Crumbles. The two political parties will give us all a little entertainment.”

" You have not heard Cameron in public yet, Mr. Heathlyn : he is a prime favourite in the chair."

" I am looking forward to a good time ; hope that you make a good deal to-day. Good-bye, old chap ! "

" Good-bye, sir ! Tell the folk on the river that I will be down this year to their sports."

" If the people here are as interesting in public as they are in private, well, they are uncommonly a very high type of mankind ; yes, I would so like to see Cameron directing public matters. My first sermon came into peculiar criticism."

Thus the outrider cogitated.

The sermon in question was a conception of mind that few could readily grasp, and the Cameron girls told their father that they thought it was a bit above their heads. The old gentleman, meeting Heathlyn, bluntly told him what they had said. Heathlyn turned to the old man and promised to try and come down to plainer expressions of thought. Cameron immediately turned upon him with these words : " Keep your seat, do not come down ; if you wish to break in a colt or

filly try and keep its head up. I understoo' a' ye said ! ”

That evening every soul in that earnest little congregation, after the usual generous hospitality of McIllfine's household, for a half-mile accompanied the missionary, until shadowy “ black-boys ” weirdly stand along the moonlit sand-track like a guard of honour in skirmish order.

To saddle, and away over many dunes where here and there a twisted banksia helps the heath and heather bind the little humas which its own deposit formed.

Gloomy the black-soak at the ti-tree edge, where many more make fair seclusion for the wandering kine.

The eager little filly determinedly faces the first steep pinch, planting firmly four nimble feet astride a log or poised upon a stump ; occasionally it shakes itself and eases the martingale which checks the saddle's backward movement ; carefully it pursues the broken way, evading the branch with splintered end. The monotony of the stunted growths is left behind, and here it is more difficult for the rider ; still the filly bravely moves along. The moon is often hid by foliage dense, and phantom

shadows steal cross road and mind of man. Twice his hat is swept from off his head ; once, a branch arbitrarily strikes the rider and bears him gently across the loins and down the filly's hocks to the soft pad beneath. She waits until the saddle is refilled, then turns to the rails in the stock-yard hill.

Happy thoughts entertain the outrider's mind ; it is nearly ten o'clock, and he will be at Simpson's great fire in twenty minutes. The double rails are carefully placed in yard and paddock fence, the pins as firmly returned. The filly bears and leads. Unfortunately the track she chooses is the cattle pad which stops this side the creek ; every now and then a touch of warning almost human awakes him from his abstract reverie—oblivious still the brute meanders on.

Fern, and branch of Christmas bush, musk, myrtle, and snap-woods with wire-grass momentarily retard the progress. The moon has gone beyond the outrider's horizon ; maybe an outrider further west afield is with his oars in hands of dusky crew enjoying its fair favours to his charted way.

Darkness means dependence ; the horse here is the best of guides until the way is cut off by a tree athwart the track.

Heathlyn, now upon the ground, with his hands reaches a barrier eight feet high ; striking a match he finds close growth upon all sides. Taking the saddle and bridle from the beast he bids the filly good-night. After a struggle he finds a hollow wherein he places his kit ; then another, and he is on the further side with the creek immediately beneath. A frog croaks, a cricket sinks to silence with its song, the wag-tail calls in warning to his mate, while opossum scuttles from its cove of fern. Mud, a pool—the track is at an end—stinging nettles hid in labyrinth growth of clematis and fern growths impede the way. At last the opposite side he stumbles on, then upon all fours he climbs its banks until he finds himself in a fairly clear spot. Terror was this effort and dread at times when leech with stinging persistence held his flesh, or thought of something like a reptile in coldness passed his hand.

“ Not so bad, after all ; there's Simpson's light still welcoming the wanderer.”

A waning flicker from the kitchen log

thrusts its gleam upon the window-pane.

In a few minutes the dogs bark their questioned welcome. "Lie down, Toby!" Then quietly he steals into the house, removing boots and socks before the fire. He retires to the room where a bed is ready waiting for him.

The morning finds him at the cow-yard bailing-up and leg-roping.

Mrs. Simpson turns round, saying: "Mr. Heathlyn, do not let the boy have Pansy; she is happier with me. Oh, I am so sorry that you had to leave your horse in the scrub. Father would have stayed at the rails had he thought that there was any fear of your losing your way."

"The filly is all I had to depend upon, the moon had almost sunk out of sight, and I was thinking of other things. Christie can look for her for me. I know where to find the saddle, and if it is convenient I will take your colt, as I must be down at Muskvale this afternoon."

"There is no need for you to run away at once, is there? Stay for this evening, and we will have the school-master with us."

"Thank you very much, Mrs. Simpson, but I have promised to meet some of the

folk down there, and they want me to go to Melbourne and see the Education Department Secretary about a school-teacher. Christie can use the filly until I come along again."

"Christie will not find much time for riding about during this part of the season, but as he has to bring in the bullocks from the scrub paddocks he can catch the filly."

"I will leave the colt with Flora Campbell's folk until I come back from Melbourne."

After tidying up and helping father lift the milk from the creek and place it with the other cans upon the wagon, everybody went down to their first substantial meal for the day, father having had his before yoking the horses up.

"So you will be staying at Campbell's to-night, Mr. Heathlyn?"

"Yes, Mrs. Simpson; I always enjoy a chat with Campbell and his wife."

"Do you not think that Miss Flora is equal to any of your lady friends of the city?"

"Now you are asking me too much, Mrs. Simpson; Flora is certainly a fine girl, but there is one who comes first in my affections, and this I am sure she will

always know. Yet a fellow wants a sort of sister, does he not ? ”

“ Be careful. I do not say it for your own sake altogether. Sisters who are not sisters have other feelings ; though, I am sure of this—that Mistress Campbell's girl is not wanting in a lot of good common-sense.”

The chat extended to many things before Heathlyn left on the colt for Muskvale.

Christie had a hunt three days running before he found the filly, and when he did find it after having had many a wearying climb, he said :

“ I am glad that the missionary did not have the hunt which I had. It is no joke struggling through the undergrowth in the new selection, and I am sure that she would have made her way to the river if that old brush-fence was down.”

His mother was busy setting the dough when Christie reported his success. Turning to her boy with a thoughtful look upon her face, she gave expression to her feelings in these words : “ Don't you tell the missionary how many hunts you had ; tell him where you found her, and that you had a ride on her to-day.”

CHAPTER V

ENLIGHTENMENT OF MAN

HEATHLYN is very much entertained as he is riding down to Muskvale. Is he really becoming a little interested in Miss Flora Campbell? "Well, this will not do," says he to himself; "and it will not do for others to imagine that I am paying her any attention; nevertheless, she is truly a little more than interesting, and gives me much to think about."

Sanders the surveyor is mopping his brow just at Tait's turn-off, about a couple of miles from the main track. Though a slight man, he feels the moist atmosphere this bright day, for he is a most energetic fellow in all he does.

Turning to Heathlyn with a most wonderful radiance on his face and a most inviting manner, bids the rider in abstraction to listen to what he has to tell.

“ Heathlyn, did you ever see that fern-gully down there behind Henderson’s ? ”

“ Hullo, old man ! You look hot—a man kept on the chain likes to feel free at times.”

“ Come with me, Heathlyn. There is something down here worth spending an hour upon ; for any time we might have a very serious fire during this month and wipe it out.”

Dismounting, and tying the horse up under cover, Heathlyn accompanies his guide. Partly sliding, clinging to every available piece of timber, stick, or tussock, the two make considerable distance between themselves and the horse. Still upon the downward way they turn along an almost precipitous wall of beautifully clothed ravine ; carefully they now move hand over hand until their feet lodge upon a jutting piece of sedimentary rock which is upper-cased in marl.

“ Be illumined ! ” says Sanders.

Aye ! There they stood, drinking in a feast verily to every sense in one prolonged and fulsome emotion—a feast !

Like a fount of clearest crystal, a waterfall in chaste cascade seems to start from

the very roots of two giant ferns and divides its stream as it passes on either side of another which bars its way: gently it flows in myriad drops upon a mass of glorious foliage which partially conceals its fuller flow. A soft spray like a veil of virgin purity modestly and tenderly touches most softly the more delicate fern and mimosa. Opalescent lights glint from its trickling successions which drip from leaf and stem. The greater flow echoes in harmony with the dull thud which intermittently resounds upon the callous rock which thus vibrat-ingly responds.

A bridal wreath of clematis festoons from silver wattle side to side; its tendrils grasp the parasitical lilly-pilly which claims strength from out the fern which clings tremblingly to the undermined bank. There upon the trunk of an old blackwood the stag-horn shield of beauty in its cluster favours the segmented bark. Sycamore, wild mulberry, satin-box, purple-bush, Christmas-tree, musk, myrtle, hazel and clambering trefoil in lovely profusion vie for place.

Both minds are mirroring reflections of thoughtful value as the spiritual vehicles

of the soul convey in charming sequences those varied impressions of form to become the niche of memory. Silence of adoration is broken as nature adjusts herself in sympathetic sound. Various particles of fragrance, maybe perfect forms of energy, intrude themselves for reference. How beautifully does life store combinations in those great galleries of the mind. Taste is touched as the clear atmosphere is inspired, while tingling feeling finds refreshment in this cool abode. What vast corridors and galleries doth man's mind obtain.

"Is God here?" In awed tones Sanders asks.

"Man! He is living presence everywhere, neither in this or that mount. His law is obeyed by all that living is. He hath no form nor comeliness, and naught that art would dare suggest will bring His effigy."

They stand upon a soft, russet-tinted carpet, drinking in the beauty of His work. Heathlyn again gives voice to his thought: "The sensitive retreat which tender fern and softer leaf display, spells to me the truth that nature feels and pains; the brittle snap-wood and the ductile wattle

in contrast share a place both side by side. How it makes man wonder, or does he more often accept than wonder at all? See the colossal mountain-ash; once it was held in a tiny case—its energy so great—thus was this invisible strength nurtured and preserved until indeed in fullest strength it perpetuated many of its kind.”

Sanders turns to his companion with a glow of appreciation. “The irresistible charm of the place would almost bid man to reclusiveness with it, unless its very sensitiveness would arouse man’s irritability by turning from his intrusion—man himself’s worth understanding; he loves to think that he really knows all that which lies beyond him, yet trying, often misunderstands himself.”

“Sanders, I have to thank you for this feast; reluctantly I leave all this which is so materially perfect—God has dedicated much to His honour, man thinks he consecrates a few cut stones to hold the God I know.”

“Where are you now going to-day, Heathlyn?”

“Down to Muskvale. Have you a message for Miss Flora?”

“Yes, I think that you can tell her of this spot better than I can.”

“Good-bye! Some day we will again find something worth a moment’s lesson from, Sanders.”

Nature is truth so hard to explain as it produces everything after its necessity.

About two miles down the road the missionary passes through a long grove of wattles, which came so readily after the fire had passed, though many decades of evidence declared that they had never before occupied the place.

The blue-hued bower bird with his mottled mate flash to their playing-place through densest veil of leaf and twig. No creeping, climbing strength can stay the woorayls that stealthily chooses its ball-room hid beneath a canopy of over-hanging shrubs in our Australian bush; here, in mimic recital it tempts and lures the reptiles from the nests of weaker kinds.

The opossum marks the bark where cockatoo thrusts in its beak to extract the grub which preys upon the wood beneath.

“Governed is life and disciplined reciprocatively—tree, plant, insect, bird and beast: yet, man would dare upset it all.”

With this thought man turns to the beast beneath him and says, " You are in higher service even than that which is of man, but all for him is sacrificed, even that service : and to this end we must attend."

After the meeting of the school committee, Mr. Campbell and the missionary journeyed on, comparing notes.

" Campbell, I thought that Smith's suggestion about having the school on wheels a brilliant one, for everybody seemed to have a site ready on the corner of his selection, and if it was on wheels it would have to stay in one place at least until the Christmas holidays ; then at the end of February would again settle in the mud."

An evening at Campbell's was always bright and cheerful, and the Book closed the day happily for all.

Morning is just breaking, and Miss Flora gently taps upon the missionary's door as she passes to the cow-yard. " Come along, it is just a lovely morning ! "

The missionary had been already about, and is quickly out to see the sun rise.

Beautiful the streaks of crimson flame which penetrated through and beyond a low

bank of clouds which stand like a battalion in line on the earth's edge.

The gathered evaporation of the day before awaits the warmth which it had patiently attracted from earth.

The light in wealth of golden strength secures the streaks of blood from the heavens, and gradually rising lifts the horizon's narrow veil until it dissipates it in its beams.

Borne by invisible hands, the Lantern's majesty in space is carried, lifted like a chalice of transparent silver overflowing with molten gold to bid to health and wealth that which in earth is latent.

"What an illumination, Miss Flora! There is a Light that will dissipate much that earthly is."

"I knew you would enjoy it!"

"There is one thing I always notice with you people in the forest, and that is—that you enjoy the things which are direct from the hands of God."

"So we should, Mr. Heathlyn. But I am afraid that we women as a rule fail to truly appreciate it all. I often hanker after the life that girls apparently have outside."

A few minutes of the morning are not wasted when these two come together, and Mrs. Campbell ungrudgingly busies herself while the young folk have their exchange of ideas. Campbell looks in once to say that he will be home for dinner, after he sees Smith to obtain certain particulars about the building and those parts necessary to order direct from the city when the missionary is down.

“Do you truly like the people up here, Mr. Heathlyn?”

“Miss Flora, who could help but appreciate those generous souls who are ever ready to give up their very best for a visitor's comfort, and this often to their own discomfit?”

“Do you think that the growing girls and unmarried young women are selfish?”

“Take the answer from Sanders; mind you, it must be treated as a secret, though he did not wrap it up in such a parcel.”

“I certainly will, for I think a lot of that man, and I am sure he would say nothing but that which is his firm conviction.”

“Well, you may be disappointed this time, for he said: ‘The women of the

forest, though they are the daughters of noble-hearted mothers, are determined to seek their future happiness far from the environment which made them all they are. They refuse to become selectors' wives, but would rather become the slaves to a city habit of ceaseless change in fad and fancy ; sooner be eternally discontented than know the true contentment of a home such as their mothers make.' "

" But you would not believe him. You know as much about the city as most folk, and can bear me out in my opinion that all is not vanity in the city ? "

" Well, I thought that he said quite enough, until Gordon Cummings came back from his old home in the North East. Gordon, as you know, wants a wife ; he has a lovely little home awaiting a good mate. He has as nice a herd as anybody ; yet, Rebecca was not found by him. He is genuinely in earnest about it, and is the most unselfish fellow I know in this forest. Unfortunately, the girls here do not reciprocate his advances ; they think that he is too slow."

Gordon is not altogether my style, and I am sure that the wife he wants will have

to be made of iron to be able to only carry that portion which he would expect."

"That may be your opinion of him. He is certainly a very hard-working man, and deserves a good helpmate, though not a slave."

"Men are too critical now-a-days ; they want wives of a fixed type, to fulfil not only the social duty but the domestic drudge. When they obtain this particular ideal, the ardent passion which is theirs acts like acid on spurious gold—the green shows—the colours change."

"Miss Flora, very few men of my acquaintance have ideals of this sort. Most men wait for the creature to becomingly reveal the ideal ; those trials which awaken in man the feeling that she is the ideal may make men imagine that they did once entertain such a hope, but I doubt if it ever before existed, for men are generally fickle. This I will say, though : The future mothers of Australia waste many hours over light literature, they do not sound the depths their mothers did—college girls cannot understand the deep thoughts that ever become the philosophy of the older generations ; they take all their medicine

sugar-coated—often, this is not assimilated ; they go to business as an entertainment or medium to obtain holiday and pin-money ; they are in a hurry ; they remind me very much of the majority of young men of their age. One went in with me during last summer for a milk-punch ; after hurriedly taking it through a straw, he said : ‘ That was jolly nice, I hardly tasted it ! Let’s have another ! ’ ”

“ No matter what sort of man he is, he always wants a wife a little better than himself, for he invariably seeks one like his mother.”

“ Miss Flora, man is fickle—he wants to get away, as a rule, from his mother. Pharaoh said he would let the people go, but the expression of his lips was very far from the thought of his heart. Men only see in their mother the true ideal of woman, but their hearts can never explain what it is they want.”

“ Man truly is a deceiver, ever deceiving himself. How much you have said that you mean would be hard to arrive at ? ”

“ Now, do not misinterpret me. Let us look at man from a higher standpoint. Man only judges by what he knows as man ;

and woman, by her want of knowledge which should be man's. Man who thinks : I do not mean the being who imagines he thinks when he is only using that which others thought for him, for this is a common product from the school system to-day. I mean the man who truly communes with Him who alone can make him think ; this man knows that all which is best is ordered from above, and that which is right and expedient comes only to the true dependent. Had Pharaoh let the people go, it is not at all unlikely that they would have thanked Pharaoh ; if man lets the weaker-sex imagine that his wife is his ideal—well, you know what is obvious.”

“ Then you admit that man is a creature of circumstance ? ”

“ Yes, he is. But do not forget it—he makes his own circumstance. The Great Architect of the Universe wants to His building certain parts ; herein is man either accepting the true liberty of responsibility through perfect consciousness, or he is refusing The Key-stone which other builders rejected.”

“ You will admit that man is free to choose a wife ? ”

“ No, of that I am sure he is not, for who gave him this liberty of choice, or the power of certain innate and sensible references. The man who imagines he has the right of choice, is the man who often regrets his special selection.”

“ You rob man of free-will, you make him a puppet ; I thought he was something more ? ”

“ Again I return to the charge, Miss Flora. No ! Man is not a puppet, he is meant to become part of a great social structure—the plan is projected, fair, square, equal : choice is his to refuse to become part, and thus, become a puppet. Choice is not always involved in reason, and reason is not subject to any individual conviction—if there is any true reason active, then things external to man come into man’s environment—is it choice or influence ? When a person acts unreasonably we find that social etiquette or moral custom was hurt.”

“ You are fast becoming a rationalist of a dangerous order, Mr. Heathlyn.”

“ Maybe I am, but, as far as I can understand myself at present, I do not think so. Just think with me for a minute—

Did Adam choose a wife ? Unconsciousness became him, he awoke to the knowledge that there was something which he wanted, he had a vacant feeling about those ribs nearest the heart—there was an incompleteness—that which he had never before experienced he now feels the want. Explain this want, this wish—once he was content ? ”

“ One thing he wanted after he obtained his wish, he failed in gallantry.”

“ Adam, Miss Flora, not having had any choice in the matter, did not blame his wife. He was under the impression that everything which God had made was perfect. Now, herein is man under a deep obligation to Adam for having awakened in his kind the censor to his acts. Adam always claimed a dignity of place ; he is at least gallant, for he did not even show pity for the instrument which God had described to him as helpmate ; yet, in sympathy he would have covered her failure through rationalism.”

“ Indeed, man is a wonderful creature after all. Many women have despised him for his treatment of his mate. Now, you say that he justified himself through ignorance, like any ordinary agnostic—

this is very unlike a few men of my acquaintance."

"My dear Miss Flora, you are perfectly right in your opinion of man. He honestly tries to know himself; he hates to think that a woman would display his ignorance."

"'Man, know thyself!' is certainly a great motto, Mr. Heathlyn. Man only knows himself perfectly when woman's quicker initiative displays human ignorance, and this intelligently."

"I agree with you entirely. It is for woman to find out man's little weaknesses, so that she can be that strength to him in happiest associations. It takes a lovely, a wonderful woman to make man perfect socially."

"Men are all alike. I think that they took more notice of the serpent's suggestions than the woman did; they know how to wriggle, twist, and turn in every debate."

"Admit, Miss, that you are conquered. Man's weakness is patent to all. He is all-confiding; he really does permit the tempter to occupy much of his attention instead of examining the fruit his companion offers. Knowing that the agent is

a creature like to himself, and naturally imagining that she has already exercised human caution, he submits to the seductive charm of his fellow."

Hearty laughter echoed for some moments through the house, until at last Miss Flora returned to combat.

"You are incorrigible, sir. The next thing you will say is that had man taken enough interest in the fruit he would have at once noticed that it was a medlar."

"Perhaps Charley Crumbles would have said that they both should have awakened to the consciousness that they were a very sleepy-pair."

"Never mind, Mr. Heathlyn; woman who is wide awake now is ever ready to anticipate man's slowness."

For a few minutes there was quite a stillness in the room, until Heathlyn again quietly retorted :

"There is not a doubt that had man been a little less careless he would have noticed that the fruit was poisonous. In fact, woman exceeded her duty, for it is man's duty to gather and woman's to prepare. Man's neglect and indifference brought about a painful experience. Man's

field is not woman's sphere, but woman's sphere is to be supplied with all that which is best from man's field. Woman exceeded her domestic limitations and failed dismally ; after taking the fruit she did not examine it, she was satisfied with what an attractive stranger said about it. Herself dishing it up attractively to the man is to be blamed for the existence of this mixed-up state of good and evil."

" Did you ever meet a man who would be so fair as to allow that woman is entitled to her right ? He may to catch a vote ; the same man is quite different in private life. He is a greedy thing, he hungrily ate as much as he could get hold of, as he always does when there is a good cook about—when he suffers he blames the cook."

" As a man, I admit we have that weakness ; I believe that every man enjoys a good cook. They are becoming quite extinct—let us hope that good women are on the increase."

" Oh, I would love to have your mother listening to you ! "

" Miss Flora, there are few women better cooks than she is. I pray that I will some day assimilate all she tempted me with."

Mrs. Campbell came in a few minutes after, and said, "Are you two quarrelling? You look as if you have had a good argument."

"Mother, I am making up my mind to tell Mr. Heathlyn the legend of the aborigines of Gippsland."

"I'm sure, Flora, he will be greatly interested."

"Mr. Heathlyn, did you ever hear of the Eden that the Australian Blacks lost?"

"No! I cannot say that I have."

"Well, once upon a time—— That is quite the right way to commence a story?"

"Yes, as far as commencing is concerned; but many a story perpetuates itself, for it is not only once upon a time."

"Nonsense, sir!"

"Well, once upon a time the people in Victoria had a lovely garden to live in—kangaroos, wallabies, emus, and many other birds and beasts wandered about at will. The waters teemed with swan, duck, and all manner of aquatic life. Fruit and fish, both land and water supplied every want. Flesh of all natures fell to the nulla-nulla and boomerang. With everything that earth could supply, the race who occupied

these domains before us never were really happy. Many the children of this now decadent people could not help but wonder why it was that the kookooburra's laughter seemed to awaken in them from a mystic depth an appreciation of life which they were far from understanding. The bird's hearty expression of feeling issued from the most sober-looking of creatures; still, it seemed that mirth and gladness long ago belonged one time to its species. The first rays of morning's Australian splendour were duly heralded by this feathered watcher, then the garden's stream so full of life was patiently examined and gloated over.

"The day ended, and in choruses full-voiced, a group laughed the psalm of thanksgiving; then, with a harsh 'Koo!' or 'Ghar!' they closed those soft dark windows to an interesting bird's soul.

"A serpent came into that garden to hurt and poison everything. This had caused in man the growth of a fearful superstition and fatalism; but the bird did incarnate that which suggested unto the wondering children—that there was something of merit in conquering this menace unto life.

“ The kookooburra had learnt to handle slippery eels whilst satisfying the innate dictates of its appetite ; hence it found good sport on land in exercising itself upon wrestling snakes. One is sinuously gliding towards a sleeping child ; the bird with one long note of warning calls—A-a-h ! No one is disturbed, so the bird descends upon man’s enemy ; lifting it in his powerful beak, he bears it high above the earth with an eddy and a strong flutter—it drops, and the bird moves slowly, yet, with lightning rapidity again seizes the reptile and again lets it fall ; now it thrashes with the earth the slowly writhing thing, until the pulse with occasional twitch expends the life’s ebbing activity, as warmth of light in day declines—the night its death !

“ Silently had a group of dusky denizens of that Eden watched it all. One of that group in wizardry, left to folk-lore a command which still remains reposed in minds of those so influenced. Thus he taught : ‘ The great totem of our race will be this bird, a long taboo for ever and for aye ; some day it will lead you to another field of flesh and light—hurt it not,

nor frighten it away, the day its laughter passes from these rich domains so soon will peace be lost ; then weeds will cover that which is now open and so clear, the other birds and beasts will wander to a greater wilderness, where man will meander in his hunt for food.'

" Reclining upon a soft and downy couch of silver grass, a lubra laughs in her simple, happy sleep. Value of life she knew, but in those dreams which brought her pictures of vast fields where many rivers ran ; sullen the light of soul which now does mark that face, as in a seance dull she reviews the unexploited effort of her clan ; this engages her slumbering thought of memory—this state, this humdrum existence is all unproven righteousness. The seance in its procession quickly brings a grace of charm into that once unlit countenance. She sees herself leading the tribe into some unknown victory, an unknown enemy had craftily cast a mantle of gloom upon her fellow folk, and this doth menace all that quickening love in her has found. Now fighting in the dark against something she can neither understand nor describe, her fellows watching with tense

admiration, yet offering no help—a voice—the Great Spirit dissipates her fear, and softly turning to her placid state of rest she pleasingly lets rippling laughter well from that lightened soul. A bird is just above upon a branch, the streaks of day like chords of harp await the touch of sound to bid all life but resurrect and herald day in consciousness; the bird it strikes the note of utopian hope—happiness bids all to rise, obey, and not to sacrifice. The lubra turns awake and joins the laughter of the feathered thing; she claps her hands in innocence of delight, but the bird with fright flew with its mates to mountains far away.

“Joining the men a little later, she finds that neither line nor spear had won that day the flesh they hungered for; then she told them of the fields she saw beyond, that even this fine place wanted its rest and Sabbath just the same as man. ‘Come,’ says she, ‘this state of self-content is never won until it’s truly gained by all which lies beyond.’ Since then they have remained nomads, neither village nor agricultural centre holds this fierce tribe. The old garden long ago was overthrown by

fire so fierce that all is lost of that which once it was, yet forests mightier with their undergrowth bar an entrance to their return. See them as their men to fight and hunt, while women bear the burdens and the flame."

"I must admit, Miss Flora, that you have told a simple story in fabulous though beautiful allegory. Some men do want to be disturbed, and when man is awakened to something of more confidence and consequence than his bodily food, he will see that life has much content."

"I have touched the old story up a little; still, Mr. Heathlyn, accept this as a woman's apology for having so enlightened man, for every man does depend upon that which lies beneath the breast of woman—her heart supplies all that he is, even the very reflections of her mind."

"I think that your story would publish."

"Publish it if you will. Not only men of Australia but those in other lands should learn of their responsibilities and all they owe to woman. Think of the many veritable old bachelor-grumps who imagine that they are quite temptations to any woman. Think of it, sir! I often wish

that woman of to-day had Eve's opportunity to rob man of his self-righteous pride ; unfortunately, the Great Disposer thinks differently."

" Why, Miss Flora ? "

" Why, need you ask ? Is not woman truly handicapped—there exists a majority of our sex, which seems satisfactorily reasonable to Him."

" Yes, a very little good will outweigh a preponderance of evil. Women, in truth, are in the majority. They certainly do not possess the power which once they exhibited. It seems to be that man's minority alone accepts his mother's wisdom—is it not very apparent ? "

" Oh, you wretched man ! I truly believe that you have a standing grudge against all spinsters."

" No, I have not. Some day I hope to find one agreeable in aims ; yet, this I will admit—all the good that is in the man he owes to his mother, for it takes a mother to make a man, and a mother to shape a man as fit companion for any woman. Still, it does not altogether continue from its beginnings as she wished."

" At last you admit that you owe

something to woman, and that she does give up something for man ? ”

“ Yes, sad to say : Jacob’s mother gave up her own peace of mind and drove her darling from home.”

“ There you are again. You spoil every nice thing you say by turning the dusty, earthly back of the picture to light. Cynically you drop acid which in its egotistical strength consumes that which is a well-woven fabric.”

“ I enjoy your defence of your sex ; thus I learn to better understand them. So do not be too harsh in your judgments.”

“ I will not. But I can imagine you at that public-meeting next week in perfect agreement with the party who regret woman’s encroachment upon their field.”

“ Truly, Miss Flora, I have always placed our womankind upon a pedestal of grace ; I see her in refined relief lifted above all that which pertains to man’s habit of life in the world of politics. I see her with quite enough burden without that she carry that which is meant for man. Woman has her sphere of influence ; her home, her family can become deeply impressed by all that which is best in mother. Maternity

does not want to have her mind so occupied in state affairs as to psychically impress them in their turmoils upon that which she to God is responsible."

"Now, I like you, sir ; you are right, and I hope that public affairs in the coming week will smack of such honesty."

Campbell gives the missionary quite a long list of things to secure when he is in town, so the missionary per boot returns to his boarding-house to make preparations for a three days' trip, then home for Sunday and the week to follow.

CHAPTER VI

PUBLIC MATTERS

HEATHLYN had been having quite an animated conversation with Galvin, the bush-lawyer.

Galvin claimed that there had never been so close an approach to Socialism as the feeling which was evident at the present time ; in fact, he asserted that the nationalization of all industries was close at hand.

Heathlyn, on the other side, had claimed that there had never existed such a state of individualism and selfish effort for place ; and, if this was what people imagined to be true growth of communism, then he was at a loss to understand it. For, to him, it appeared that every unit was either influenced by a greedy spirit of acquisition, or else they had become only content when they knew that they were judged in the

open courts, as at a certain value. "Once," said he, "you fix man's value to the community at a price, you arbitrate away his soul: thus he becomes a pawn to be only moved by those who imagine that they know man's value." Waxing very eloquent, he finished up with these words: "Jesus came for judgment to this world, not as a divider of that which is material, but to quicken that consciousness of happiness in man which would give to employed and employer a reciprocative understanding of the true measure of every talent."

Of course the great question uppermost in the minds of the people in the settlement was that which the papers were arbitrarily at war over: "Should the Constitution of the Commonwealth be altered?"

"The people want it," says Galvin; "and union is strength."

"Galvin, I am inclined to imagine that, as unions now exist, they are not a strength. They exhibit a spirit of might instead of that which is truly moral; and this might is a weakness—a deplorable weakness, for it binds in chains of slavery men who boast of their right, who at the same time bend to the will of non-progres-

sive legislation—crushing genius, discouraging application, only satisfying the greater number who are content to exist and exhaust.”

Galvin was always urbane and genial, and as ready to own himself in the wrong if others' weight of evidence told against him. Though now a little influenced by Heathlyn, he still clung loyally to the principles he believed in.

“I believe that you are perfectly right, Mr. Heathlyn, according to your way of looking at things ; but, there is a deal too much said against the Labour Party's Caucus methods. If it does not ease off soon, there is this grave likelihood—that the Caucus will do in full that which they are credited in doing by a lesser caucus which sits in three editors' chairs.”

Heathlyn was for a moment taken by surprise, and accepted Galvin's summing-up. So Galvin proceeded :

“This I know—The Caucus is the instrument which a mighty organism wants, it is the safety-valve to a powerfully pulsating engine, it is the conscience of human consciousness which has long been subdued ; in itself, it meekly accepts the

impressions of the spirit of the times, and, as healthily as it can, gives expression in form of that which it believes is strongly reasonable."

"You do not think for a moment that the other side are dominated by certain city papers?"

"Mr. Heathlyn, I am sure of this—the majority in the Labour cause are out to do good, and they readily make sacrifices; while, the other party hate to sacrifice anything. Some do truly give of that liberality which is theirs by no power their own, but many do it that others will see that they and not their circumstances permitted it. The party which we now oppose is not at unity with itself, it is a fusion brought about by political jobbers—convictions and every other progressive interest has been submerged to serve one end—that end, all know. There is a pit of doom for all who fail to answer to well tried convictions. There is a golden stairway to be patiently essayed by those who bring their convictions to the test. Many lovely blooms have been exposed to fierce winds, petals have helplessly fallen, but not before the fruit found itself upon the way

with that mixture of golden strength won from the experiences of another plant. Yes, our cause takes the pollen of liberalism to that, its fruit—some day you will appreciate its sweetness—its flesh.”

“ Then will we master our business, think you, friend Galvin ; or, will our business master us ? ”

“ It is not the carcase we want, that we prey upon it until we become over-satiated ; it is our hope that we save the state from the vultures of tradition which naturally desire to prey upon that which they think is theirs by right—right, by what right, I would like to know ? Surely the bulwarks of Britain are a lively defence if needs be. Surely those same walls are ever ready to follow a true leader in every militant effort ; neither to the hurt of King nor tradition, but to the very moral uplift of all in the state, and the King’s happiness, in that he in dignity accepts a fuller life in the happiest state. It is not down with the King—it is honour the country’s Emperor—make him that which others in a peculiar caucus took from him. We do not wish to hurt the constitution, we only desire to strengthen it—who can, if the

mass fail in allegiance ? 'There is no army without a general—two armies in fusion claim a Waterloo !'

"Then you think that Bill Adams is now sitting in Collins Street doing a great blow ?"

"Mr. Heathlyn, there is a Bill Adams sitting beneath a pair of rusty spurs—his articles are now written with little punctuation, but many full-stops. The pen is not as mighty as the sword when a wilderness has to be conquered—the slashers and fern-hooks bear down the labyrinth, the fires of enthusiasm burn the growth which encumbered our selection—men may write, but swords command ; and the pen which follows brave deeds does itself an honour in that it was a quill cut by the sharpest sword. Upon the cuff of a fallen officer's linen we can expect to find these words : 'I believe I see victory—the sword of honour from the enemy drew the blood of my fellow by which I write.' If we lay down our arms we will lay down our lives, and life here is really worth sharing."

Just then Charley Crumbles joins the group, and was an interested listener to Calvin's last few words. Heathlyn turns in recognition of the new-comer, and after

greeting him, he draws our friend into the debate.

“No doubt, Mr. Galvin, that had Mr. Crumbles been here to have heard you, he would have been more than interested; the other day he was actively at war against the present system of government.”

“I do not wonder at it, either, for Charley knows as well as any city youth that there are brighter places to be found than a crowded city. This present state system of government is bad—increased centralization is imperilling to any national progress. Investors encourage it. The country representatives are becoming city agents—the legislator within an area of any radius seventy miles of the metropolis is often himself disfranchising the country. All freight is directed to one central market of control, not to the direct advantage of the producer; country members will not do their part in supporting the man who sees wider and thinks more generously. If a farmer wants aid, he turns to the institution of that city—would not a state concern be of infinitely better use? Why should the true producer have to accept any terms that a banking combine may

dictate? Why should the man furthest from the city have to pay that freight over a long road which is after all the city traders' advantage? Why is it that the manufacturer can only reasonably compete against the world from one centre? Why is it that things of utility are torn up in that city and its immediate environs to please a clamouring few, when the same money could be expended to the better conditioning of those so far afield?"

Crumbles, with a little drooping of an eyelid which veiled those very expressive eyes, quite quietly told the debaters a little story.

"There was a marine-dealer used to hold forth in Studley Park every Sunday. When I was not too busy I used to accompany him on his rounds, and had to listen to him holding forth against the Chinese—the Yellow Peril. One day I went to help him carry some empty bottles out of a stable. While there, I noticed a white hen in the loose-box, which I drew his attention to. Well! the old agitator could never let sleeping fowls lie, as the saying goes. He shooes and waves the bag he couldn't make, at the chuck—of course she cackled a bit

and advertised herself—she looked for a moment as if she was going to fly at the orator ; anyway, for a few moments she fussed a bit, then took to the nest a little angrily again. As we drove along to the next place of call, I said to my friend : ‘ Folk are careless with things ; you would never think that enlightened people like those at that house would allow a fowl to sit so close upon a china egg—they do not seem to care what is brought out on their premises.’ All he said was : ‘ It’s a typical instance ! ’ Ever since then I have been wondering why it is that he himself was born in Australia ; no doubt his best friends don’t know ? ”

Galvin enjoyed the story as well as any of them, and as attentively listened while Crumbles went on :

“ The orator is a man the people draw round, I can tell you, when he is dealing with the question of housing the poor. Mind you, there is something about that man which you could not help but wonder at—he is a genius in his way—he gets as much done for nothing as he can ; he always shelters any refugee from justice—Splinter Crook was working for him on these terms,

and slept with the pony in the stable. Coming out early one morning, he says to Splinter : ‘ Awake up, covey, those cobwebs are still in the hundred bottles at the end of the yard ; if you don’t get up and about you will never get ahead of things. You lie longer now than you used to.’ ”

Everybody thought that Crumbles had told the story without his usual brilliant finish, and it was quite a unison of voices who said, “ What did Splinter say ? ”

“ Oh, all he said was, ‘ I’m of age now, boss, and stopped growing ! ’ ”

Everybody enjoyed the joke except Galvin, who wondered what Crumbles meant.

“ I say, Crumbles, it would take a cyclone to arouse some of you city boys.”

“ No doubt, Mr. Galvin. The orator was a tornado at times : he could lie at any length ; but Splinter had only grown to lie a certain length.”

Galvin was turning away to go, when Crumbles said, “ Ever seen a cyclone, Mr. Galvin ? ”

“ I don’t remember having seen one, but I know this, that you like taking a twist out of us in the country.”

“ Not a bit of it, old man. But you

know Hyland's cattle-dog—there she is—that dog had that twist in her tail after the last cyclone, February twelve months ago.”

“ Mr. Crumbles, I saw that dog long ago ; he had the twist in his tail before.”

“ Mr. Galvin, excuse me—most dogs carry their tails behind.”

The group dispersed, until the meeting to be held in the evening again drew these public-spirited men together.

Cavendish was very much in evidence during the day ; he called upon all the leading lights of the community. Quite a hum of voices issues from the public-hall as Cavendish enters, closely followed by Cameron, the most prominent of the settlers at The Ridge. Along the east wall, seated in the midst of a group of labour-men, is young Stewart, with an armful of paper-clippings and comments ; for he is to defend the position for that party.

Many the hearty handshakes and kind enquiries for respective absent ones. The shire representative, rising to his feet, proposes that “ Our old and esteemed friend Mr. Cameron take the chair.” Nearly everybody seconded the motion, and a fine Highlander, over six feet in his

shoes, shook a large-boned frame with a certain dignity, and led Cavendish up the flight of five steps to the platform.

The chairman, who is seventy-eight years old, gracefully draws forward a chair for the speaker ; then, turning to the gathering, he introduces Mr. Cavendish in a few words.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for the honour that you have conferred upon me. It is my personal delight to be here this evening as a listener to our friend Mr. Cavendish, who has ever been a worthy advocate of the Liberal Cause. His ready wit and eeloquence in handling queestions of poleetical interest is well known to you. Now, I kna’ that the gude folk heere wi’ gie him a fair hearin’ ; for, I dinna’ think that ither ha’ e’er been extendit to ony mon in this place.

“There be no need that I ask ye to gie the speaker a patient hearin’, few men cou’ better hold ye than he who is now going to treat us to a veery intructive exposeetion upon the matter which eugages so much interest. Meester Cavendish, I wi’ now ca’ upon ye ! ”

When a generous oration finished, the

speaker graciously dealt with the subject in a masterly manner. The "little member" like a flail with strength of words descended upon ears so full of seed—the seed was freed, the chaff silently passed away; but, dust rose when the well shaken receptacles, overflowing with all they received, made acknowledgment of their opinion of the speaker's value as a teacher. He fulfilled all expectations to his friends and party, and his political antagonists felt that they were leading a forlorn hope.

Stewart and others asked many questions. All were directly answered or as easily evaded, unless, the answer by subtle involution left the questioner wondering what question he asked, or at a loss to understand the answer.

The chairman in asking for the vote of thanks did not fail to becomingly compliment the speaker. Then, preparing to vacate the chair, he puts the motion.

McLoon is sitting beside Stewart. He rises and asks Mr. Cameron to retain his position as chairman.

The old man in loyal wrath steps to the front of the platform, his whole frame

trembling with passion as he clutches the end of the table.

“ I wi’ ne’r keep the cheear—I’m na turncoat ; if ye think it is an ’ooner, I dinna’ ! I’d be beceased, an’ prejudeeced, I’m shure—I’m moure than sateesfied wi’ a’ I’ve heeard ! ”

Cries of “ You are all right ! ” “ No better chairman on The Ridge ! ” and many more seemed to weigh against his original intention.

“ Gentlemen, ye’ll forgie me, but I’ve ne’r stood but wi’ one partee sine I thou’ fer mesel. I kna’ Stewart’s feather—there’s mickle I ha’ wi’ the son’s polectics : nertheeless, I’m a’ ye’re biddin’ the noo.

“ Ladies and gentlemen, the moure ye get, the less maybe ye’re willin’ to put up with. I thocht that Meester Cavendish most lucidly and instructively deesipated the mony queestions hurled at him. I dinna’ ken ha’en heeard onti’ the noo, such a pointed attack upon every poleetical posection. Oor larned young freand Meester Stewart is a laddie ye ken ; he is aboot to build a’ tha’ we ha’ no toime for ; I believe he is veery gifted and commands talents o’ muckle power. I ha’ na doobt that he sees

thee advantage which is his, in followin' sich a mon as Cavendish. He ha' inder his arm a gude deal of paper, na doobt he ha' much wisdom up his sleeve.

"Mr. Stewart, I'll be straight wi' ye. I canna' say I'm delighted to preside for ye. I'm shure tha' you wi' get a gude hearin' ; I ne'r knew a meetin' on 'The Ridge to fail in that respect. Youre eeloquence and mastery of polcetics wi' without doobt ecleepse a' that the ither mon ha' said.

"My gude folk, ye'll attentively listen to the young mon, a' of ye—I'm shure ye'll want to ? "

Stewart was heated and vexed. For a few minutes he railed upon the chairman who in grim irony taunted him. The meeting itself was enjoying Stewart's discomfiture and was a little disorderly.

The chairman is quickly on his feet, and calls the meeting to order.

"Ye'd please gie ther laddie a hearin' ; there's much interestin' matter in a' the paper he has on ther table. Better to ha' it there, than na' kna' wheere."

Stewart, much chagrined, returns to his copious notes and clippings from many days' daily papers—these are authorities of

some weight—but he forgets to support any with his own views: instead, he quotes others to support these publications. At last he is hard at it, galloping past all the principles; forgetting that there ever was such a thing as a constitution, except his personal feelings—he sinks to his chair an abject apology.

The chairman rises.

“I’m shure that ye ha’ heeard more tha’ ony mon expectit. Meester Stewart’s readin’ was gude; the pecty is he left it. He didna’ explain a’ that ye’d want, na doobt; theefore, I wou’ bid ony of ye who think that there is somethin’ he cou’d explain, to put it as lucidly as ye can, for he might foind it deeficult to onderstan’ ye. I’m sartain he’ll try his best.”

An intelligent looking man in the front row, rising, asks this question: “Would Mr. Stewart give us his views upon the question?”

“Na’ that’s too bad a’ thergither, ma deer sir; the puir laddie ha’ but done his best.”

Stewart and the chairman for a few minutes hold a very interesting debate. The chairman tries his best to satisfy him that the question is an unfair one.

Stewart turns upon the chairman : “ I must hear it—let me judge its merits. I’m not a fool, and will not be made one by you.”

“ Meester Stewart, I’m shure that I wou’ na’ try to make a foo’ of ony mon—that’s wi’ himsel’, ye ken !

“ Meester Stewart, if ye will ha’ the queestion, it is this—Mr. Hewer wants to kna’ what youre opeenion is ? ”

Showing deep resentment, and visibly trembling, Stewart addresses the audience : “ Gentlemen, under great disadvantages I have been for nearly an hour endeavouring to place my views before you. In support of my ideas I have read to you the opinions of others, the best of which I am sure came from the other party’s supporters. I cannot go through all this again.”

Quietly the Highlander approaches the front again.

“ My gude folk, ye must think wi’ me tha’ Meester Stewart’s readin’ was verra gude considerin’. But ye wou’ na’ be askin’ him to read it a’ agin—no doobt he is tired of readin’ it—could yer not collectit yersels ? He admits that he ha’ dune his best ; I’m sartin he wa’ tryin’ hard. He admits that the best opeenion is to be

found with the folk of oor party. If ye ha' na' understoo' Mr. Stewart, ye na doobt are perfectly satisfied with Mr.—a' Mr. Cavendish said. I'm shure that I had much more pleasure bein' here than I thocht I wou'."

The usual votes being put, the chairman closes the meeting with these words: "I must gar hame to my ain fireside and think it a' oot, for I'm thinkin' that there's much still to be larnt fra' Mr. Stewart's effort—it is hard e'en for an auld mon to arrive at an opeenion for his-sel' ; therefore, I wou' bid the laddies to be cautious when they utter ithers' opeenions."

Heathlyn lends the Highlander his arm up the slippery street, but does not dare comment upon the meeting. At last, coming to the gate of Cameron's house, the old man takes his young friend's hand and bids him good-night.

"Meester Heathlyn, ne'er fear the trooth ; send it home. 'Trooth dinna' go o'er people's heads, yer ken, but misunderstandin' it is na justeece. Cavendish used mighty words, they understood them ; words used Stewart, na doobt—I dinna' like poleetics. Gude-nicht, laddie !"

CHAPTER VII

THE BUSHMAN'S COMPANIONS AND FOES

SOMETIMES four or five days in itinerancy from foot to saddle, nearly always cloaked in oilers and topped-boots. Valise with a change of small clothes and night-wear. Two water-proof saddle-bags, with Bible and hymn-books in the one ; in the other tracts, texts, and letters to be posted.

The man who moves amongst these warm-hearted people must carry the spark which will enkindle the feeling of confidence—to gain it, one must have the element of trust ever aglow. Enter the spirit of life which is the settlers' daily habit you immediately feel at ease—it is a gracious spirit. Bear in memory the activities of interest from the one part to the other, is a duty of vast importance. Carry the news of all that which is the entertainment of those in the forefront of public-life, you serve

your state. Yes, the settler looks not only for the man who brings news and encouragement, but takes quite an interest in the horse which bears the bearer—many dimly lit ways are wonderfully pursued by the bushman's companion—give him his head and he will come out all right.

Heathlyn's first equine companion was a brown, hardy clumper. Though not all that some people would desire in a hack, yet, he was just that sort of horse which could battle through knee-deep mud and never stop when a length or two of slush rose high upon the girth. He was one of those thorough-going brutes which climbed without any hesitation any hill; and, as often as not, slipped and slid in perfect poise upon all fours down any sudden incline.

If there was one thing that he had an objection to, it was cantering along the uneven planking of the corduroy-road. Many other good bush sorts exhibited the same dislike, and as readily trotted when the top was dry.

Any good bushman will tell you that it is a good thing to wear spurs, for it is necessary to stir your beast up when an

ominous cracking is heard overhead ; yet, it is obviously a sign of poor equestrianism to bring blood to the rowels.

The missionary always wore spurs ; not alone for his own safety, but his companion, though dumb, commanded a little consideration.

Upon one occasion an experience in itself quite alarming to both man and beast proved the efficacy of such application upon the clumper's ribs. An immense giant groaned menacingly beneath the southerly breeze which swayed its great limbs—creek—crack ! Without deliberation the instrument of incitement goaded the animal on both quarters ; with powerful strides he shot forward ; already a tree had fallen across the track, leaving but a narrow opening at the one end, and covering the fence three chains away at the other—the horse dashes through and shares the rider's honour. The rider's boot on the left side is cut with three spikes from the barbed-wire fence, his oilers have a square tear a foot each way—better the boot than the clumper's square shoulders.

A few days later and man is seen in a glistening habit of black from head to heel,

only here and there a speck of mud ; the day is raw and cold, and the blood flows thickly. Horse and man look at their best—spring bloom on beast and glow on rider's cheeks. Wilby is coming along with a little yellow cow and her first calf this Sabbath morning. The missionary is intent upon picking a track through the quaintly unreasonable and affectionate softness which placidly rests upon the face of an abrupt rise where neither tire nor hoof had churned it up for more ready future attachment. Right in the middle of the road between the two surveys is a charred log like an immense dug-out canoe ; within this, three sportive lambs had been at rest while their respective ewes had been busy gathering herbage in the clearing close by. The colt had seen lambs before, but never embossed upon a piece of charcoal. Like marionettes they moved so suddenly that they frightened the horse ; with a snort and plunge he sprang to one side, turning his pawing fore-limbs as he slipped into an old rut. Heathlyn never satisfactorily explained how it was that he got down from the saddle so suddenly, but Wilby witnessed as fine a catch-as-catch-can match as he

ever will. The rider received as clean a throw as any referee ever unhesitatingly pronounced a judgment upon—every bone of his greater girth touched the ground. Still holding to the reins of the struggling horse, he is rolled over upon his face ; the beast is now upon his feet, and rearing, lifts the man to his knees—the shorter end of the reins has broken in the struggle, and the buckle is still in his torn hand. Very quickly Heathlyn is now on his feet, and turning to the clumper, says, “ Donal Dinny ! ”

Neither horse nor rider look as well groomed as would be expected even for a Sabbath day.

Wilby is now helping the missionary remove the mud with a few bracken ferns.

“ Hope that you are not hurt ; you came a beauty ! ”

“ Gave me a lift, didn't he, Wilby ? Innocent looking things often cause much mischief at times ! ”

Straightening himself up and overcoming his feelings, his breath soon returns to its regular inspiration. Except for the dirt one would never think that either man or his companion had fallen.

“ Better come along down to the house and spell a bit. It won't take long to put the kettle on ; in fact, the wife will be waiting for my return with a bit of lunch ! ”

“ Oh ! I'm all right now. Mud is common enough and does not hurt much. How are all your folk ? Do not let them imagine that there is anything the matter with me. This little experience will become another thought to graphically translate a head in my address at the Railway Terminus. It is very necessary to watch as well as pray, but it is a weakness in a man who watches only that which is at his feet. To-night unconsciousness will come to the lullaby of the Southern Ocean Roll. He who orders is all consciousness.”

“ Do not like to think that you are going off without a cup of tea. That square-hipped, long-ribbed brute ought to be at other work than yours.”

“ Wilby, he is a rugged and tough sort ; some days he takes a lot out of me, but I will be loathe to part ways with Donal.”

The experience was often retold, the innocent were blamed, the passive rut was harshly thought of, the horse seldom attached by any calumny. A few days

later Campbell was riding by the spot with his daughter. "That's where our minister came to grief. We have little to thank the government for in roads." With a flick of his stock-whip he punctuated the expression. "That brute he rides is pretty nimble, anyway; did the minister a favour by parting company. Nasty place to be rolled on; apparently he got a severer shake than the rider."

"You can see the saddle impression there yet. I think that the brown filly would suit Mr. Heathlyn better than his beloved Donal?"

What a day—life's very happiest radiance! There they go, the horse at full canter along the sand track which passes the little two-roomed iron hut where Ewen the shepherd is adjusting the links of twisted wire to his fox-traps.

Just about a half-mile distant is the ocean, which lifts its myriad morsels of sand, shell, and weed with majestic strength to slowly but surely bury the great trees which fringe the inlet at the river's mouth. Only a few miles away is a glorious cattle ranch with flats of five thousand acres, two thousand of which are judged to be the

finest river-plain country in Victoria ; these, a century or more ago, had occupied untold depths, as well as questionable heights. Now, where once a cove was hid behind some sand-hummocked rocks, grass in plenty is perpetually green. Ti-tree helped the wind-drifts to pile up in even succession that which amalgamated with the alluvial deposits from the mountain buttresses. Time patiently builds over the tree-tops now in silent confidence.

“ Woah ! old man.”

Donal, with a lurch, nearly unseated his rider, as he swept with his hind feet a big black snake off the track. After a fruitless pursuit, Heathlyn mounted and rode on to the hut where old Ewen was busy.

“ What was up with your horse just now ? ”

“ Before we were aware of it, we were right over a black snake. Donal gave him such a fierce sweep with his hind-quarters that he lifted the reptile high into the fern and heather, at the same time almost hurling me off the saddle. I got down to look for him, Ewen, but he seemed to understand the horse’s idea of where he should be.”

The old man, with a twinkle in his eye, scanned the horse up and down: "Not much to look at, anyhow, for a hack. Wonderful how men try and make beasts, as well as themselves, fill wrong vocations. The horse is a good enough fellow in his way; not the kind that many would be looking for—it will be some time afore you part company."

"I'm not so sure of that. He whisked me off very nicely the other day."

The old man squeezed through the rails and approached the rider; he placed his hand upon the horse's mane and confidentially unburdened himself to the missionary.

"Are you looking for a little interesting work, sir? It is somebody's duty to speak to Slack, down there on the river; his wife does everything. It is a wonder that he does not get tired doing nothing!"

"Ewen, he has tackled a big job—that is, if he truly intends to complete it; hard to explain as an absolute necessity, never knew it to be at all satisfying. Did you ever know a man who succeeded in doing nothing?"

"You're about right. It strikes me that it would be happier for his family if he

was made aware that there existed better contracts."

"Well, Ewen, I will call upon him again. I know where he can obtain work—one has to be so cautious with him. Irresponsible beings in all phases of life imagine that they carry life's heaviest burdens when they lift them upon other shoulders."

"Mr. Heathlyn, self-service is dangerous—it is well sometimes to be pressed upon the thorns of the hedge by the eager crowd who jostle along—if there is a burden, maybe a thorn will grip it; or, mayhap a prick will force us onward."

Heathlyn, after a chat about everything in general, turns the corner for Slack's. Ewen calls out—"These fine September days invite the copper-heads and tigers out, as well as the black-fellows."

Not six chains further along Donal stops with a shudder. Directly in front of him are two small glowing red eyes, an expanding thorax is flattened, then lifted, as the partly opened mouth of a tiger-snake protrudes its tongue in threatening and dumb question. Heathlyn drops the reins upon his companion's neck when he dismounts. Quickly he disables the enemy

and lifts its body over a stump which is near. Donal with a whinny of entire satisfaction bends to the weight on stirrup for a moment, then lopes along in his lumbering canter.

A gate which is hanged badly, or rather wire-strained, has to be opened—it always swings open either way, and is quite an exercise of skill to bring together even when you are dismounted. Donal knew this, and he helped by permitting one side lean upon his hocks while the rider manœuvred his fore-quarters until the other part was seized.

Away again for a few minutes. “Donal, hold on, old fellow ; see that chap up there beside the marine-frontage fence ?”

Heathlyn is down endeavouring to find a suitable stick ; one after the other he has to throw aside. All were too rotten, having been so long waiting for a fair season for a burn-off. The big black snake is moving along very leisurely in its coiling shuffle. At last Heathlyn finds a reasonably solid log about three feet long. Donal is in the hunt ; he stops near a tussock, making a peculiar noise as he snorts alternately—six feet or more of reptile is sluggishly

settling into a lair, the log is hurled upon him—writhing, twisting, twitching, he straightens out and is quietly lifted to the wire-fence, where a month later a broken skin held some well-cleansed bones.

Donal and his companion had many experiences together those first few months ; a day was quickly coming when he would have to again submit to the indignity of drudge ; bending to it, with slippers tacked on by his owner, which were at times very uncomfortable and pinched. He did it uncomplainingly ; many times his knees came in contact with the logs over the marshy parts ; the hillside plough he laboriously struggled with as he helped his old sire ; chains cheered him on as he helped the long logs' ends to the horizontal ; swush and splash of the water from the butt was a weekly religious accompaniment as he pinched the track with his toes in effort to scale the bank above the creek. Summer-end saw him tired and strained.

Nearly everybody has seen Calder ; he is active in all parts of the world where horses are—he sells horses in all lands, he is incarnate in all colours but retains one type. Just picture him in your mind's

eye, nearly five feet ten high, stands with his feet well apart while he balances the body which holds a head that has a straw or the end of a hunting-crop between the teeth ; quick grey eyes set under straight eye-brows ; a nose with bridge only slightly indented as it sweeps with a curve and lingeringly describes the movement downward ; high cheek-bones seem to at times give either end of the mouth an upward twitch, while the small, quick ears shine in tightened skin above a few inches of sinewy neck ; yet the chin counts—it is the foundation of all that which determines a deal. Sometimes he will sell you a disappointment, but he hates to make a mistake in a deal himself. He is not the auctioneer who will sell a cracked pot with an easy conscience when the luncheon beer is helping.

Calder sold the minister a little brown filly ; it was very like the one Flora Campbell had suggested as suitable for the work.

Everyone admired her as she came up the road to the bush-schoolhouse the next Sabbath day. Standing a bit above fifteen hands high, with plenty of bone and clean

hocks, which supported a short barrel—to her admirers she suggested much endurance.

No one thought that a mistake was made by either party to the deal.

Says Calder to the missionary: "Take care of her, sir; she will carry any weight. That little mark over the knee will not go against her; the lads down on the river let her hit the sticks. She is now just off three, fairly early foal, and will grow a bit yet. When you want a nag for navigating these hills, get one her stamp—short in bone from knee to fetlock, low in chest-bone with free wind-pipe—that tail does not slip easily into a crupper, I'll warrant. Go round the other end and look in her windows, eyes which look into your own—that's the sort that likes good company; she is none of the swine that rush headlong upon a sure end to disaster. Do not mount her carelessly for awhile, until she is used to the oilskins. Square deal; you'll want a fiver on your bargain come next foaling."

She turned out a beauty. How she faced and completed those heavy trips through seldom unchanging wet weather, and humid summers, her master was ever pleased to relate; this fine filly, with a

fair proportion of good breeding, was both light and strong, though not wanting in bone.

Sanderson and Rutland are on their way to Wannambool, just turning down the road to where the "Fiji" was wrecked. They turn in their saddles upon hearing the approach of the galloping filly. Her rider is as usual enveloped in oilskins—long coat and leggings to the thighs. The filly is quite enjoying the exercise; she loves company.

Through plash and splash she is soon abreast the other beasts.

Rutland turns toward the church's out-rider: "Good sort of mare that you are on; carries your weight well. You have very discouraging tracks to essay."

"Pity the horse, Mr. Rutland. She was bred in here, though, and is quite affected by the spirit of the place—she was as anxious as I was to pay her compliments."

"Very characteristic of the settler, is it not? It is seldom that your best city friends treat you with such hospitality?"

The chat became so interesting that Heathlyn did not notice the time slip by; just as they reach the west branch of the

road he hurriedly bids them "God speed," and gallops away.

"Sanderson, that fellow and his horse seem in earnest. I would not gallop my horse down that hill."

"He has stopped, Rutland. One! Two! Three! that fellow is finished: another parable for the aerial navigation."

"Those are not the worst foes that Heathlyn will have to face in this place. A man can see a snake, some black ones you have to lift out of your way. There is a subtle creature at the Railway Camp which emits a poison which is transmitted to others. This poison is obtaining hold of many a man who imagines that he is his own master. It is on every highway. It is limited by license to the few for longer hours than that which is of necessity sold by the many during much more limited hours. No one knows of its activity until it is master of the situation. Nearly every selector in O'Neill's track pay their tithe to the publican without a murmur."

"Yes, Rutland, many a good horse has been sold there. Wonderful the wire fences which have been swopped for the wire on the bottles. If you were to tell some of

them that they had unconsciously swallowed a comfortable dwelling-house, they would tell you that you were mad."

"Sanderson, the little Bush Inn has a banking account of four thousand pounds per annum, while it takes three cheese-factories with thirty-two suppliers all their time to show this business."

"I quite believe it. The bank has come in to help it, I am informed. The greatest drain upon the asset wealth of Australia is this trade of iniquity—a very small proportion of the grain, fruit, and syrup that it takes to its use becomes the commodity which meets the demand—this infinitesimal extract of good foods is sold at an awful price."

The friends journey on, but often their thoughts revert to the outrider.

The experiences which man and horse share along these bush-tracks no one need envy.

McKellar furnished his boys with an express-wagon; its under-carriage still occupies a place on the surveyed road—it has been there only seven years. This vehicle was especially fitted up with all camp requisites. The requisites and upper

appurtenances of the vehicle reached their destination, but the wheels which were meant to convey it have long ago gone to dissolution. This did not altogether discourage the McKellars.

Just around the corner and down past Regan's, a fine staunch colt was progressively browsing. It moved along through a clay-hole in the midst of this black, sandy-soiled beech-country—this hole occupied the very centre of the old main road. From eleven in the morning until five-thirty, three men with shovels, and two sets of tackles with a sling, are hard at it—they saved the colt.

Here, Heathlyn turned one day, and was very much enjoying a ride upon a smart little Colac polo-pony—this was during the summer months. Had it not been for the pony's activity and ready resource, Joy, the owner, would have lost a valuable little beast ; as it was, the pony got a fright which it took him a long time to forget.

For man and horse physical dangers are many.

The summer is drawing its short stay to an end ; Heathlyn is in the little union-

church down on the river. His subject this day was upon the storms of life. "My good people," says he, "the Master knew the thoughts of folk when they least knew them themselves. The Galilean fishermen thought that they knew how to handle a boat. They hurried the True Pilot aboard their craft, but He did not do so without warning them against false confidences. He said 'Beware!' Mind you, the physical storms which buffeted that little vessel were nothing to the storms which later assailed that little church which a few fisherman launched."

Just then a fierce wind which had been threatening, violently struck the building, which shivered for some moments like a human thing. Eloquent silence prevailed for nearly two minutes. Fiercer the blast arises, menacing the timber walls. Outside, the horses became so disturbed that a few got free and turned their tails to the storm as they found a stump which suggested a wind-break. One member of that congregation looked outside to see was everything safe. Quietly the service was brought to a conclusion.

The horses were soon in hand and quieted,

nothing more serious than a couple of cheek-straps broken on two old bridles. The storm was serious indeed, and all looked as if they must immediately make for home.

Wilkins tries his best to persuade the minister to go down to their house. He points out that the wind will without doubt continue throughout the day.

Heathlyn explains that it is not wise to advertise a plan of services and fail in its fulfilment. Says he, "Only five miles and I will be picking up the others on their road to service."

"There is no shifting you, when you have made up your mind; but danger lurks on all sides."

Pulling his hat well down upon his head, tightening his belt about his oiler, then the missionary springs to the saddle. The wind is fiercely assailing the timbers; upward, onward, the first rise of seven hundred feet is bravely covered by the brown filly—branch is stripped of twig and leaf, stems and stumps crack and fall in mighty salvos. At the bend over the gorge, the strength and force of the wind sustains a cloud of forest debris, which is only broken by leaping limbs and eddying strips of weird

lengths of bark. The companions pass on.

Encouraging the filly, the outrider stoops forward. At length the first plateau is won, where a massive black-butt stands near to a wire-fence. Behind this they take shelter, finding Smith with a baldy cow and calf.

Like volleys of musketry which accompany the sounds of the lashing tempest, louder than the breakers on an even cliff, the great forest wails as it bends to the thrashing by the spirit of the wind. Much is sacrificed to this devastating influence. Do these inanimate things pray? The men even are awed when the first silence lulls the scene to peace.

Heathlyn is on the ground munching his lunch of bread and cheese, while Smith is telling him that there is much more danger ahead.

"Smith, it is inspiring, it is exhilarating : I enjoyed some of those blasts ; but the filly wanted a spell, and I must look after the crumbs."

Many trees had come down from fence to fence, for the main-road kept the top of the ridge. No beast living could have possibly jumped them : imagine the steeple-

chase, if a horse could—for five miles, over seventy monsters barred the way—man on horse could not even look over more than a third of them—one bulwark near Crow's was piled thirty feet high !

Heathlyn is on and off his horse knocking the staples out of the posts ; fern gullies had to be essayed and abrupt ridges climbed.

At last he reaches the little building which serves as church, school, and hall for dances ; here, he quickly takes the saddle off and throws it under the building. The storm is again rising, it hurls mightily against this square of opposition. Entering, he finds its iron chimney nearly parted and screeching against the iron roof dismally ; the unlined walls belly and crack like the sails of a schooner—the nails creak and will not give way like a ship's tackles or the lashings of lawyer-cane in a tropical structure ; grindingly a piece of galvanized iron wrenches the baton to which it clings ; a piece of weather-board ripped and twisted claps and crackles.

“ Whoo ! she blows ! ” Heathlyn is on his feet with his hands upon the joists, for a moment imagining that his puny strength is needed.

In comes Simpson with an anxious look upon his face. The door fights with him ; it was twisted off the bottom hinge the night Crusty Carruthers fought a ten-round go with the bush champion—it's shut.

"Why, man, you're here ! The wife would have me come along and see if you had arrived. I told her that you would never leave the river. Now I'm here, I might as well stay until you are ready to come home."

"Glad to see you, Simpson ; you are better than a congregation of fifty-seven. After a word of thanksgiving I will press on to the Railway Terminus."

"No one will expect you, Mr. Heathlyn. I am sure that there is not one in this district very far away from their homes to-day. I came along to please the wife, and walked our three miles where I knew it was safest. The filly will be all right in this clearing for the night, so you better give in."

"Look here, Simpson, if I cannot get through, it will not be for the want of trying. If I fail, I will try and come back to you ; the hazard is worth much."

"You ought to arouse us, Mr. Heathlyn,

if anyone should. Anyway, we will be expecting to see you sometime to-night ; maybe you will be able to pass along another two miles."

Filly and man continue the experience ; horse and rider are ever on the alert, neither seem to know fear. " Whoa ! Whoah ! Close, old girl—what thunder ! "

Seven in quick succession are lifted from the roots, clay is hurled six chains away, the great hulks glide down many feet from where they left holes seven feet deep surrounded by a fractured crust. Advance is now impossible, the way forward is closed, the earth intermittently vibrates as the thudding timber thrashes the soil.

" Beaten ! "

The outrider turns to the filly, which is now following him : " Can't do it anyhow, old girl ; why ! your leg is cut—thought that you strided the wire that time. Never mind, I will give you a holiday to-morrow at Simpson's. We will count this a service in the quarterly report ; I hope that the director will admit it—the folk would."

Mrs. Simpson was much relieved when she saw man and his companion come through the rails. The evening brought peace !

CHAPTER VIII

THE ELEMENTS

THE elements, without doubt, which are the most useful when controlled can become the most arbitrary of masters when they have broken those bonds of limitation that man's feeble discipline is enabled for a season to exercise.

A spark from a flint has set fire to a city ; the first drop from the leaden clouds of the sullen storm that threatens has proved greater potentialities ; wind and tempest lend their irresistible energy to the excitement of the forest fire's sweeping-right, and intensify the marshalling and condensation of the clouds to this or that particular place.

Anyone who has viewed the result of a good burn-off must know what a great advantage this element is to the settler who faced a dense primeval forest. One day

Heathlyn was looking down from a track upon the ridge over the steep sweeps of hills in Carl Larsen's selection. What we imagine he thought has already been given expression to ; but, what he saw was an evenly distributed and graded slope of ashes—there was neither stick nor stem, fern nor frond of undergrowth. Here a mighty trunk or there a smouldering log intensely entertained those myriad and minute flames which fervently consumed their substance. Some such lively coals, fanned by fickle puffs and fluctuating breezes, cast at his feet a procession of countless sparks. The devastating flames had charred and scarred every tree. Man's work with slasher and fern-hook is not discernible ; where men had piled the sticks and stems, an occasional ember glowed as the wind laid it bare.

Artists have endeavoured to portray a bush-fire ; does brush or pen describe the appalling, the terrifying grandeur of this element at work as it so quickly changes scene of shade and colour ? Think you that this tensely surging and potent energy, in its restless authority, will permit its might be translated ?

What rapidity of activity is seen in those gaseous, igneous clouds which skud, hurl, and thrust themselves ahead of the wall of flame which labours below to their supply in continuity—these dry the path and seize upon tinder as the succession of sparks in their following occupy a likelier opportunity—all seems so ruthless and ruinous, but preparedness is confidence.

In the hill country many furnaces first stealthily become alight ; the flame flickers, yet, not uncertainly, for with assurance the blaze glows as it realizes its promise—it mounts, it extends, it reaches, it embraces ; its parched flame in the gorge drinks in every fluid breeze of cool refreshment to conversion of another usefulness—the field of operations enlarges, the gorge meets two or three higher gullies ; here, the tongues seize devious ways—thus is homestead menaced as a fire with alarming magnitude quickly surrounds the buttress, where all man has for years laboured for, is so perilously placed.

Is it a wonder that the human family has submitted and sacrificed to this element which so conclusively proves man's mind as naught in its imagined right over

matter ? “ The wind and the wave obey His word,” man in all he knows has not yet been able to add “ one cubit to his stature ”—some think they can, yet a mother travails.

Talk to one who has gone through a trial of strength against this element with every puny instrument that the mind of man has been able to conceive. Speak to the settler who with his neighbour watched thirty-six hours, toiling laboriously for seventeen, with a few wet chaff-bags and a prop or two ; hoping with this help to save his homestead. Chat with the mother who, with her babe in her arms, her bairns at her skirt, did stand in the sheep-dam for five hours ; aye, her little ones were braver than the stoic, who never had to face the ordeal of brushing off a stinging spark. Listen to the stockman explain how it is that he obtained that scar on his cheek and others on his hands ; he tells you that it was unwillingly he left his companion behind as he staggers away through the embers of a veritable furnace with the saddle on his head. Who has not turned to hear the mailman relate the story of his experiences ? “ Lash, I did lash my

coach-team into a gallop over the broken corduroy which still smouldered ; down we rumbled and tossed, at last lodging in the broad ford of the river, where bird-life exhausted, and rabbit, squirrel, opossum and lizard hesitated for a space."

Join the fugitive who retraces his steps a week later with his loyal helpmate—they contemplate all that which is left of generations' gatherings—sheets of iron and bed-posts are disturbed, a twisted metal frame which once held to memory a face of one in a distant place grimly testifies that matter exhausts, but love still lingers. Tears are dropped while thoughts are mingled—her sympathy is more than all he has lost, it outweighs every material loss, this he has, this he knows : " Sandy, mon, it may ha' been worse. 'The kine got through, I'm shure—I heeard theeir ca' this morn nigh the marine frontage."

These narrators tell the story their own way, one with graphic and bold outline only missing that which modesty veils, or humility evades ; another in honest submission accepts it all as best, and only tells you a little as occasion prompts. Many minds lend tints of detail that art

is powerless to translate. "What a memorial," says Heathlyn. "This monster's power is best realized when its spirit is withdrawn; inanimate panoramas of denudation, charred stems, a sway of ruin!"

A few weeks later, the outrider, while staying a night for rest upon his itinerancy is thus awakened: Crack! Oh, what a crack and clatter as those innumerable clusters of sparks burst from a great hollow log which threateningly stood upon the opposite ridge about seven chains away from the window where he arose behind.

No word interprets that sound or its echo as it summons the household to attention; every hoof is on the clearing long ago; a few treasures and the family's best things are all carefully placed in the tunnel above, near the dam. Many faced that fire without much warning; still, this year it was not so bad.

What of it two years before?

Andy McLean's story is worth repeating. During the days when he was quietly convalescing and regaining his strength, also losing a few disfigurements, he occasionally had opportunity to unburden himself to

those few visitors who could afford a little time to look him up.

An epidemic occurs in a city, and a few materialists, more in vanity than in honest respect, endeavour to preserve from threatened deformity the visible attractions and God's favours. Why is it that heroes quietly and without ostentation and advertisement, accept scars ; aye, terrible disfigurement in service of their fellows—thus, more perfectly revealing that which man is ?

Bob McLean is undoing the chains on the hame-hooks, as he says to Andy, "There's a fire at Regan's."

Little more is said ; the horse is freed from sledge and harness, Bob is assisted with the whey by Andy, who takes one side of each twelve-gallon can to either calf or pig trough.

"You'll see to things up at the house, Bob, after the cans are washed ; I better go and see what they are doing over there—your bairns will want you."

Andy is soon over the river and quickly climbing the hill. Reaching Regan's homestead, he finds its owner with about a dozen sacks wetted in tubs ; two bush ladders

stand at different ends of the house—beside one is a pitch-fork, and near the other a garden rake.

“ Getting warm, Regan ! ”

“ Right down glad to see you, Andy ; I’m on my own.”

“ Seems to be coming from all quarters. Yesterday, I noticed it near Coal Creek and by Kennedy’s Track. May expect it to come from almost anywhere, this weather ; this is not anyone’s burn-off.”

“ You’re about right, Andy. I let the cows out on the grass-tree country ; Mary and the Missus took the horses to Colac with the butter. The boys are up at Costly’s mill.”

Preparations continue ; both men break away from verandah and sheds every inflammable piece of hessian or bark—there is a lot to do, and the fire is surely coming close.

“ Regan, it is a good thing that I came along. Bob will look after my place. We are waiting a chance to burn-off ; this has kept me busy picking up again. My grey mare is lame—she tipped the whole show over the other day crossing the bridge—and Bob’s neddy is doing all the work now.”

Just then a flight of sparks began to find settlement on house and sheds. Both men instantly moved—neither needed the other's promptings; already many sparks have accepted a place on the cracked and dry paling-roof. Quickly the ladders are replaced and readjusted as a perpetual fight is constantly waged. Bag after bag dripping with water is carried aloft to extinguish the part which threatens to enkindle; lighted twig, leaf, and bark all command vigilance. One great and sustained trail of sparks like a continuous rocket's trajectory covers a distance of almost a quarter of a mile.

How these men fought under the blinding and singeing which the enemy thrust upon them is wonderful to imagine. When Andy tells the story he leaves much to be understood, he is a man of few words.

"There goes the barn, Regan. I will try and shift the logs of the fence. Look after things this side."

"Let her go, Andy; can't be helped, anyhow. The boys will give me a hand to rebuild her come Christmas next. But the separator is not yet paid for!"

Andy, with fierce strength, releases the

cross-chocks of the fence, the logs roll apart. It is of little use, for the house is now alight.

“Regan, old chap, come away! Hurry up, it is on all sides! Come along to the clearing.”

Not blinded, but with hands and faces chapped and stinging, stumblingly they reach the two acres. Superhuman strength is lent them as they kick and heel a space of sufficient room to lie down in for want of a place of real safety. Blinker, the old cattle dog, accompanies them; silently he witnesses the effort, then he trustfully reposes at their feet.

Warriors of the back-blocks not dull of wit, not slow of action, fit for any emergency, retreat when necessity bids them display such bravery.

“Andy, this is no place for wimmen. As much as I wish the missus was here, I know that it is better that she is not.”

“No place for man; man’s worst enemy would never wish to see him in such a plight. It’s getting warm! You ought to have burnt those two old shells out last autumn.”

The green grass near them is scorching

Both men, with their foreheads resting upon their hands, lie with noses close to the ground. Regan mumbles a reply: "It's now seven autumns that I have tried to burn them out."

An old limb in its fall hurls a few coals and its burning end close beside Regan. They dare not look up.

"Andy, pray, man, pray!"

"I'm no praying man, Regan. God knows what's in my heart."

"Andy, man, pray!"

"Regan, God knows my doings well."

"I've prayed for you, Andy."

"Thank you, Regan! There will be a time when words will go for naught; my thought is with you, thank God!"

Another crash, the shell is down, and its coals have settled very close to the two recumbent figures. A few hours pass. Two good neighbours, unable to shift for themselves, are found by those who could not come earlier to their aid; the crippled dog, which now totters about the little hut on the riverside, has lost the lower joint of one hind leg and the toes of the other—he told the story!

Next day, Regan is placed in the hospital,

there to remain for three months. Andy's prayer was heard, we believe, for it took much the same time for Mrs. Bob McLean to fix him up. The day these two again met, neither hand of Catholic nor Presbyterian wanted in honest appreciation of the other's respective feelings; long they held one another in true Christian grip, mutually reciprocating a confidence only won by those who have together faced the very portals of death.

Sometimes Regan leans his bent shoulders on the logs of Andy's wall, and listens to the old gospel hymns which a church dignitary described as "Sugar candy things." Men who have given expression to such thoughts never had the training so much needed now-a-days. The passionless tree knows where to find sweetness.

What a terrible fire that was. Next day, ridge after ridge, gorge and valley burst into furnaces of terribly cruel heat. He who releases man from this material habit, alone witnessed the passing of two brave bush-lads who had rushed from their hut during mid-day lunch-hour to release the stock, as it was supposed. In the stock-yard are found a few buttons, a

pocket-knife and watch beside the few charred relics of two human bodies, which were accepted as such when searchers found the irons of two bridles and saddles in the shed which had fallen about them in that place.

Spencer is over at Hayes's, women and men are all about. A piece of floating bark drops down Spencer's open flannel. Quickly he divests himself of his clothes without any false modesty; yet, this good man always feels quite conscious when he meets the members of that family now.

Deep hearts felt sore, tears were dried up—at least, they did not come to the release of those poor, pent-up souls who did not know how to express that sympathy which so much wants softening by sorrow's dropping pearls.

Fires serve and fires waste, but water gathers and denudes.

Those high up the river often benefitted by a flood. One morning Lang found his nicely cleaned river flats here and there lined with about seventy logs which he did not wish to lay claim to.

The floods of years in regular sequences had graded many acres of rich alluvial

soil, as it in sludge had been eroded from mountain, hill, and gorge.

Here and there it is not so. No, that which current and flood of seas had left quite even is now in places knolled and ridged. A log often helps bridge the river's stream, diverting it ; a few sweeping limbs cling to bracken and shrub, and collect the particles which in sedimentary process leave the lap of the flood that would carry them on.

Never mind the contour, the flat is the pick country ; whether it is flat along the river banks is not the question which much bothers the dairy-farmer who reclaims them for pasture land.

Dense and impenetrable scrub of mixed shrubs had to fall before the blade in man's hand. Few holdings on the ridges, for all time, will vie with these fertile river banks as places for production ; yet, for beauty, where is there any place more charming and engaging to every sense than a mountain home in the glorious forest ends of The Otway ?

Upon the hill-terrace peeps out a chimney from a roof-top which is nearly covered by the luxuriant fruit trees which grace its

four quarters ; softly and caressingly the clematis in wild abandonment has wandered far over that roof and robs the bricks of their dull red. It has accepted the many years of companionship lent by the banksia roses, which now trellis the verandah front and droop back in clusters to the purple sarsaparilla which succeeds to bloom.

The dripping-yard is on a rubble edge of the original banks of the older current, and six sets of neat bails stand up high and dry out of the softness but a couple of chains lower down.

Strawberry clover holds its own against flood and scorching sun ; the crab opens pores in the flat, but destroys the drains and ditches ; blue-Kentucky and rye-grasses softly shed their variation of deep hue to the favour of the lighter coloured tussocks and straws which still held a sole and right.

Just below the turn the five-acre is like a cabbage patch which is well cared for. What potatoes ! ten acres contiguous carry sorghums or some such well-leafed and fleshed stems. Some holdings have no turns, fields unfortunately lay open to the

flush and flow which denudes the surface of the soft mold and bears seed with early blade out to sea ; this can be overcome, but patience is truly tried by the already very busy farmer. Cantlon three times lost his crop, one way or another, the one season ; his first was carried away, his second was silt-covered and scorched, his third shared much the same fate, the fourth time it came away too late to ripen.

Though the showers fell so liberally and continuously upon the mountain range, there is an intermittent deluge which sweeps much before it.

Heathlyn is chatting with Richardson, when the latter turns to him and tells him the experiences of Christie Flint. The story in its truth needs naught to make it more attractive in the telling than is herein related.

Christie left the city during those days when five thousand clerks and accountants helped swell the army of the unemployed, and temporarily so. Hard days indeed for soft hands, harder for sensitive souls ; but, much was lent for man's future guidance.

Christie strode into one of the Western District towns where a land-board was

sitting ; his application had been made some days before.

See him—just the type of man to fill any appointment—plenty of bone and sinew reasonably covered, a head well stored and evenly poised, fresh and healthy in colouring was that strong, oval face with its full and rounded chin which reposefully stood at ease beneath a regular and firm upper lip and free nostrilled, square fighting contour to his face ; but, that which won you was the quiet calm of the dark grey eye.

Born for a larger field, yet satisfied with a little back-yard ; why ?

Selecting a pretty knoll and its accompanying flats, he applied successfully.

The day he came down to settle on it, Capall accompanied him and warned him against building on the knoll, but to build upon the edge of the buttress which also formed part of his selection.

Christie came down to prove things for himself. He soon made a space large enough to swing an axe any side of the house he intended to construct. How carefully he chooses the piles, which he lets into the ground six feet in some places. Many times he was warned.

The hut was very firmly established. Silver-box held the soil ; upon these, two inch stringy-bark slabs were most securely laid—the roof carried strips of this tree's pliable and tenacious outer fibres. A building which would defy any floods : at one end a bunk about two feet from the plank-flooring is well stayed to the wall, while the table's legs go right through the heavy flooring.

The first year passed most pleasantly, though a great amount of work was accomplished. But somehow the next year's summer - end brought heavy rains and nothing ripened, nothing dried—" How could he get a burn-off ? "

Upon his flats were heaps of scrub and fallen timber. The floods came in the spring of the year following. The accumulated stuff considerably helped the rise, as it formed a great bank below the little hill where the hut stood.

One morning at two o'clock a soft lapping awakens the sleeping selector ; early the day before heavy rains had fallen upon the range. Christie's hand reaches out from beneath his blue blankets until they touch the surface of the water ; his hand does

not re-seek the blueys but gently searches the table edge for matches, with which he lights his hurricane-lamp. Neither alarmed nor dismayed at what he sees, complacently he contemplates it all under the lamp's light from his bunk.

Very soon he is quite interested in a novel which he had placed under his pillow when weariness the evening before bid him to unconsciousness in God's hands. At this early hour of the morning he quietly draws the lamp nearer. Time is passing and the waters rise. Hesitatingly he lingers for a moment in turning the next page, for the water is now touching the sagging canvas of his bunk ; methodically he places the book upon the table, then he reaches for his garments, which he puts on ; his boots float upon the waters, but a pair of socks which hang in front of the fire have to be cautiously obtained.

A new position is seized. Upon the table, with the lamp hanging from the rafters, he pensively reviews the besiegement : though in a crumpled position, he is at ease. The hand which tries to make the body more comfortable touches the leaves of the open book ; again he takes it—every

now and then he scans the surface of the black waters, whose ripples catch the reflection of the light's soft gleam. Time to be moving again ; he has no one to talk to, so his thoughts are not expressed. Matches and watch enter his shirt pocket, an overcoat covers his now upright frame, as he stands upon the table with his soft hat on ; in his belt the novel is crushed. Up he swings to the cross-beams of the hut. There again he firmly contemplates the cold water's encroachment upon his stores and treasures ; a half-bag of oatmeal floats from the top of his safe in the wall—this he seizes and places in his shirt. Time is passing, the flood is lifting, soft gurglings and bubblings rise as trunk and shelf of stores accept the pervading and permeating softness which enters unrestrainedly ; again the soft lapping is touching his booted feet—perturbed, he tears a piece of bark free from the roof and carefully finds a place of ease as he straddles the hip-roof of his staple abode.

The day following and its night saw this lone selector philosophically waiting for a turn of the tide, or a bursting of the bar.

The break came. During that day and

night's vigil he had heard the grinding, grumbling, groaning, murmurings and creakings of the drift wood—this seemed to all become swallowed up in a sound not to be described upon the second morning; the water subsided quickly and quarrelled as it endeavoured to find exit from the places it had so quietly entered.

Heathlyn is on his visits, and we can enter with him the little three-roomed cottage on the mountains, where a very entertaining fellow resides. Christie Flint is not at all prosaic, though he is so easily contented and satisfied with the simple sphere wherein he is circumstanced. Heathlyn learns much as he journeys.

CHAPTER IX

FROM HOME TO HOME

“MR. FLINT, do you never feel the want of the society you once had more than the taste of?”

Two kindly searching eyes look into those of the missionary's, as his lips open to give expression to a thought no doubt long ago arrived at.

“Heathlyn, the taste was never sufficiently acquired, and my memory entertains much that I would not like to again pursue.”

“You surely do not intend to remain in this place all your life? Do not think me rude, Mr. Flint, but I am sure that you could fill a happier place and fuller sphere—Australia wants thinkers.”

Quietly Flint rises to take the hand of the missionary. There is an honest grip in

those hardened fingers, there is a true ring in the voice which says : " Seems to me that Australia's native timbers are not thought much of—they try them before they are fairly seasoned. Now, this old piece I am gouging is working well though it is so fibrous. I am not native to an Australian city, it is not at all like the cities I love ; they always put too great a strain upon youth in your cities, while in the home-land it is the mellowed strengths which withstand the test. That is not a bad groove, is it ? Mind you, I have taken a little time over it—it is not slummed."

It never took Heathlyn long to arrive at what was meant, and he soon satisfied the forest philosopher. " Flint, you have not found your groove—it is not what a man imagines he knows that will count, it is what he does and the reason for it. Australia is an investment ; every life which enters it is welcome—never forget this : every child that is born belongs to the community, by no wish its own, by no wish of parent is it here. God gives a large field to man to exploit to others' gain, as well his own—all we know we owe, all we are is His."

For a moment Flint hesitates to reply. Sadness and a little heat blend as they express his soul ; yet gently he says : “ Mr. Heathlyn, point out to me my place. Long before a missionary came in with us here, I read for the boys and repeated extracts which I knew were of intellectual value. How long I thought for them they will tell you. As far as the future is concerned, I saw no need of priest ; man answers to his own conscience, that is, if he is a man. I have quieted consciences and attended to all and sundry temporary affairs. More I might have done if I dare, but I have never dared teach that which to me is not a conviction—others can, I will not ! ” Heathlyn is moved to more graciousness of manner.

“ I know this. In fact your kindness to everyone here is much appreciated, but not too highly so, I am sure ; still, you have been priest yourself.”

“ Heathlyn, I beg of you—change the subject after I tell you something. First look at this piece of timber : it is grooved—two grooved pieces do not answer in full all that which is desired of them—we want the tongued piece to fit in. I am in a

groove, I believe that the expression of my life has found its place for awhile. Now I will say no more than this: Do you think that the life in this clay tabernacle is to sleep until the day comes when a total annihilation of all that which is material in this house not made with hands is called from that materialism which priests teach is to become annihilated; will this in me sleep—priests say it does, yet sell purgatory's at a price? Friend, Jesus has conquered; more I will not say."

Over a cup of tea and some luncheon biscuits the conversation turned upon many interesting questions of the day. In parting company, Christie Flint delivered himself in these words: "Heathlyn, life may be lonely; you may imagine that yours is the only light that shines in a solitary place. Do not forget that there are elements which will rise upon its feeble glimmer to extinguish it. Lift your lamp a little higher, go up with it; place your abode beneath you, overlook that which threatens all that which is yours. Glad to see you, you are a light on this hill—God bless you!"

Man to saddle and away to Zeal's, where a man of interesting personality is to be

found. Do you remember the medium-sized, dark-eyed man with raven locks, who stood beside a fishing-boat at the sea-side mending a torn sail ; or, seated on a block, turns his nets to find the breaks ? He is not altogether successful in the forest, but he is an enthusiastically energetic man, and during the cheese-season he never wants for work, while the other months his softened hands break and chap through exposure.

“ Been along to see Christie, sir ? Fine fellow indeed, helps me run the factory. Do not know what we would do without him ; Adamson says he is worth tons of grass-seed : though he tells others to gather theirs, he never worries about his own. Jones had him over to fix up some letters for him, which were worrying him ; and Larsen says that he wrote a letter for him in his language, to some lawyers in his country.”

Heathlyn fixes the reins on the five-inch nail above the milk-stand and joins the perspiring factory-manager. “ This is going to be a good year all round, Christie tells me ? ”

“ No doubt, indeed, though I had to turn

away a couple of cans this morning ; people will bring their milk too new—they think that I am hard upon them.”

“ Is it not wonderful, Mr. Zeal, how careless some folk are ? ”

“ Not altogether careless. Now Cooper tried to get through by placing his one pail of beestings in three cans, thinking that his care would be overlooked. Those days which I spent on the coast made me watchful. One has to know the habits of the fish to know what to expect—the waters may break, but it is always well to go out with the right tackle if you want to land anything.”

“ Many of the folk, Zeal, live under a cloud in these hills.”

Zeal cheerily responds : “ Mr. Heathlyn, some folk like to live in it ; they wish to make others join them—though many rest here, I try and see through them. Said I to my boy the other evening, when he was going fishing, ‘ Bait your hooks well, use strong tackle, let your line run only where there are no snags, and don’t let your shadow fall upon the spot where you hope to land anything.’ ”

“ I will take this to myself ; for, after

all, I think that my work is that of the fisherman rather than that of a shepherd. I do so hope that what I do will be justly attractive, and that I will not be seen in the effort."

Zeal for a few moments tried to explain, as he thought he had made a slip; but Heathlyn eased his fears, and thanked him for a lesson he hoped to profit by.

Thraeder enters the factory at this moment. He is not long in the place before he is bursting with the news, that "Goodfellow the auctioneer intends to stand for the Shire Council."

"I never will forget him," says he; "better than all your banks is Mr. Goodfellow."

"He seems to be a prime favourite with the people, Mr. Thraeder; but his agent O'Neil told McHine, the machine agent, that 'Middle men should be kept out of the forest.'"

Zeal turns for a moment from his cutting to put in a word for the absent O'Neil: "McHine is always pestering everybody to buy pianos, and O'Neil said to him the other day: 'You know, Mr. McHine, that I ordered a couple of wash-tubs and a

mangle from your firm twelve months ago. My daughters' fingers are kept pretty busy now ; maybe, you would like to help them. You soapy agents want a bit of rinsing, though ! ' ' "

" O'Neil himself sent me out to Goodfellow after the last big fire," says Thraeder. " I lost everything ; the bank refused help, but the storekeeper supplied me with wire and things. Goodfellow let me have a herd, also twenty stores to eat up the grass which came away from the government seed. ' This was two years ago, and now we do not owe anybody, thanks to Mr. Goodfellow. The banks would have sold me out for two pounds an acre if they had their way. Mr. Goodfellow stopped that ; you cannot purchase it to-day at four times that amount. "

Zeal, with his rake busy, turns to the departing missionary with these words of encouragement : " It wants men's help ; the men who stick to us will never want for friends—take my bill as I have written it off at fifty. I've known Goodfellow to write others off at less. We cannot get more out of man than he is worth, and I am assured that the people who accused

the steward unjustly were some who had to be written off as good enough."

"You are right, Zeal ; love of neighbour comes very close to that which is best. Good-day, all of you !"

"Be good !" says Zeal.

"Good luck !" says Thraeder.

"So long !" echoes the assistant, as the missionary turns his filly's head for the track down to "The Wattles."

Little Jock McLellan is but four years old ; he is coming up from the cheese-house as the missionary dismounts at the back-door.

"The Wattles," where Jock's good parents live, is a pretty place ; the old log-hut is now the dairy and store-room, the new house is very snug and comfortable.

Mrs. McLellan is ever ready to welcome visitors, her children always tidy and presentable. Quickly she engages the missionary in debate about his last sermon : "You left hell in the grave, Mr. Heathlyn, last Sabbath day ; do not always keep it there—hell has a mighty power on some lips."

So for awhile each exchange convictions,

until they find that their beliefs are much alike.

Jock comes to the missionary's knee and lifts a pair of soft blue eyes to his face. He has something very interesting to impart : " Mr. Heathlyn, do you know how old I am ? "

" Well, Jock, you look wise enough for six."

Jock's eyes have never turned away. Still intent upon his listener, he answers the question without comment : " I am seventy-eight ! "

" You are a big boy, Jock, but I do not think that you are as old as that."

Jock's father is entering the door as Jock makes the statement.

" Dad, I'm seventy-eight : you told me, didn't you ? "

" Never told you such a thing in my life, Jock. Don't be telling the minister I did."

Jock kept quiet until the usual greetings were duly finished, then he stood beneath his tall, fair-haired parent awaiting encouragement.

" What is bothering you, Jock, my lad ? "

“Dad, the other day you said to me : ‘Jock, you are growing into a big man. Just jump on to the scales and let me see how big you are!’”

“Ha, ha ! Jock, I remember now---the cheeses were seventy-eight pounds weight. You were much lighter indeed ; anyway, you are not five years old yet.”

When Heathlyn had lunch, Jock accompanied his father and the missionary on their tour of inspection to see the improvements. Before leaving, he had a chance to explain to Heathlyn : “Mother says that on my first birthday, three years ago, the new house was finished ; next birthday, you will have to sing a song for us.”

Three o’clock, and one more visit must be paid before the sun withdraws her leading. After an hour and a half in the saddle, McMillen’s gates are entered. Under a large black-wood tree, two saddle-horses are hitched.

“I wonder what is wrong at Mac’s to-day ?”

Jumping from his horse, he passes the reins through the throat strap and takes a turn in the stirrup-iron ; letting the horse go, he enters the garden. Little Alec is

waiting for him with a little old-manly air of importance. "Father says that you can let the filly go in the garden; mother wants you to stay, as Jeanie is very sick."

"All right, Alec. Is everybody else well?"

When Heathlyn enters the roomy kitchen he finds Anderson and O'Neil; the latter withdraws for a few minutes. Bending over the little maid, he tenderly kisses her. Jeanie responds with a lovely smile which lights up those sad-sick eyes.

The father noticed it all, and with an anxious ring in his voice, turns to the new-comer with the question so often asked: "Think you, she is likely to pull through? I rode four hours last night to fetch a doctor, but he refused to budge from a case which he dare not leave at present. He thinks that she has had something which did not agree with her. 'The wife is not wanting in knowledge where babies are concerned, and now she is tired out and anxious. The last two nights the neighbours have been helping.'"

The wee lassie of nearly three years of age lay in her father's arms; softly the fingers of the bush missionary touch the

child in affectionate caress. Turning to the father, he enquires of the doctor's treatment, and is informed that the medicine makes her sick.

Heathlyn suggests a little magnesia, but meets with little encouragement. At last he persuades them to try it ; then, at a reasonable hour, to feed the child with the white of an egg and a few drops of good brandy.

" There, Mac, just try what I say."

" Wife, I think that the right doctor turned up. 'Take the bairn while I go down to the Bush Inn."

Anderson volunteers to go, and is soon under way ; while with gentle solicitude the mother helps her babe take a little medicine

The child received much gentle care that evening. Big, kindly, soft-eyed bushmen took turns in nursing Jeanie, or else they talked in subdued tones to Alec. The Hindoo hawker takes his turn and supplies sweets to Alec, as he says, " By an' by, she lib all right ! "

Morning in brightness gleams through the four-petalled clematis which partly veils one window ; though it is so early, a sound of horse's hoofs is heard.

Robertson peeps in to enquire in his own inodest way, "Wee Chairlie wou' kna' how oor Jeanie is?"

"She is now well, poor bairn, to what she was. It is good of your laddie to think of our Jeanie."

Green, who has been about all the night, rises to bring the cows in: "You need not turn out this morning; the missionary will help Robbie and me with the cows."

"Many thanks to you all; I'm much in your debt. Thank God!"

Heathlyn, after the milking, is chatting with little Alec. Alec asks the same question that Jock McLellan had asked: "Do you know how old I am?"

"No, Alec! Jock McLellan asked me the same question, and he said he was seventy-eight."

"Mr. Anderson does not believe me, and I know that I am five boards and a half."

"Five boards and a half, indeed! Where did you measure it, Alec?"

Alec turns to the wall near the fire-place, where pencil marks are many. "That is Jeanie's there. Have you a pencil, Mr. Heathlyn? When Jeanie is better I will show her how big I am."

These words of Alec's were medicine to the anxious parents. Every home has its cares ; the children are its blessings.

The thunderings of the rising tide strike the cliff's base below McMillen's selection ; softer the echoes which ascend through the gorge to the silent nurses who have been watching a little heart's effort which now so peacefully repeats a normal energy.

The thanksgiving words were said after mid-day ; then, the missionary turns his face eastward, and with shadows before, he urges his horse onward.

Three children are playing in front of the one-roomed paling hut, where Craig's little Joan is so ill.

Craig had had many opportunities. All his folk in the Mallee had done very well indeed ; why was it that Craig was so easily satisfied with a spasmodic effort ?

He could do as much as any other man when he liked. He never wanted for encouragement from the friends and neighbours, who gave him a few old cows ; but, still better than culls—these, his wife attended to until Craig sold them.

When he selected, he chose the lightly timbered country near the heathland. This

he did, imagining that the earliest results were the best and could be obtained with the least effort. It never satisfied him, as the accident of good fortune was not ready to favour him. Now, after ten years of much forest experience, he houses his wife and five bairns in this dwelling so cold, bleak, and uninviting even to creeping things.

The missionary enters the hut upon the woman's bidding ; there, the mother fondled a little deformed body of a fuller soul, she croons to the wholesome spirit which is within. Yes, she loved and tried to nourish the earthly casket which was to be a companion in that neglected home for a few more months.

" Mrs. Craig ! I did not see your children at the Sabbath-school lately. How is little Ivy ? I have a card for her."

" There is no better seat than that old bush-stool, Mr. Heathlyn." The mother, poor soul, long ago laid away her regrets.

" Ivy is just the same, poor lamb. The children have no clothes to go amongst other people's."

The missionary tries to assure Mrs. Craig that they always look clean and cared for.

"God help them! My man is fond enough of them in his way."

What comfort is it to any mother to be reminded of all which might have been? Thinks the visitor to this neglected home.

"It's wet to-day, and the wind makes the rain search every chink and crack in the palings—an hour ago the sun was shining."

"Many shadows here, Mrs. Craig, but life beyond will not know them."

"Craig put a piece of hessian on the rafters; it only holds the water for a little while before the big cold drops fall."

"There is a heart of warmth for God's little ones." With these words, Heathlyn gives the child a picture-card of the Good Shepherd.

"Ivy never complains, Mr. Heathlyn. Sometimes I have to place her in that nook in the wall under that strip of stringy-bark. It does blow so, down through the logs of the open chimney."

This delicate mite has for three years uncomplainingly journeyed through life. Her darkened lids quietly part, as she lets those heaven-lit violet eyes of beauty rest upon the card in her hand.

"Is our Father in Heaven a God of love, Mr. Heathlyn?" says the child's mother.

"Mrs. Craig, Ivy's chief end is to glorify God. What is for this world will not count—better know a physical deformity than the dread anxiety which becomes the mother of a moral failure. Angels look through those windows into that lovely soul."

Ivy was a Father's gift to a woman who wanted something to soften and help her. This tiny weak thing lent strength to a life which would have otherwise to nurse much unhappiness. Craig's eccentricities of conduct were often hidden behind the veil which love wove mystically about his child—the sufferer always claimed everyone's attention.

Once Craig was roused to take the child to an eminent physician. He always displayed a morbid interest in her. Irresponsible as he really was, still this little depending baby girl called out that which all can appreciate in a man; when she left that home, others had to share it.

Before leaving, the missionary tried to persuade the mother influence her husband

to place little Ivy in the Children's Hospital, or, have advice from the bush-nurse. This she half promised, but did not favour the nurse at all, as she was sure Ivy would not like her.

A week later some friends helped the father, and he journeyed in the jolting old coach over those miles of trying roads with his bairn in his arms for five hours ! Throughout another day he travelled by train, still carrying her throughout that tedious way to the city ; next day he takes her in his arms through some miles of the city, where all the hospital authorities could offer was—one fortnight's rest ! Back again, to that home—did the well-cared-for staff know that home ?

Such a cold day it was when these two poor souls who both wanted a strong hand's help, entered that forlorn abode.

The man sorrowfully turns to his wife with these words of reproach to all that which is boasted science : " They admit that they cannot do anything for her ; she is better with her mother."

What a mission of a little more than three years ; this lily toiled not. Calmly she delivered her message and left. " Take

me," she said to her mother, "take me to the good nursie who loves me."

The long strained mother's heart in its new yearning folded the others closer. The father, inspired, carries the tabernacle in his arms within a tiny coffin to its last resting place—tenderly he lays away that which he so little understood, though of earth! One said: "If I tell you of earthly things and you believe not, how will you understand that which is heavenly?"

After leaving Craig's house that day Heathlyn turned home with much of interest buried in his heart.

The day is closing a month or so later when the missionary is riding up from the river past Dooley's.

Mary Dooley is standing beside the gate of the dripping-yard, where the wet cows are patiently ruminating, and awaiting their turn to go to the bails.

"Mother, there is Mr. Heathlyn on his way to the settlement!"

Mrs. Dooley quickly puts to one side her half-filled pail and slips out to the bush-track. As a rule the missionary stayed for a chat, but this evening he is apparently

not going to. "For the love of all that's holy, stop a moment with us, Mr. Heathlyn!"

Mrs. Dooley's tea and scones were as generously laid before the stranger as the friend; her hospitality was genuine. Dropping the reins over a stump edge, the missionary approaches the unverandahed house in the clearing.

"Well, Mrs. Dooley, I did think of going on this evening, so you can forgive me this time? How are all yours?"

A trouble is stirring in the soul of the woman—this soon finds expression: "Oh, sir! I thought that I had left all my superstitions in the home country."

A Catholic soul is as much to the missionary as the other. Kindly he turns to that good woman who wanted help and sympathy.

"Very few folk go through life, Mrs. Dooley, without being preyed upon by imagination."

"It's no imagination this time, I am sure. The Blessed Virgin's picture fell from the wall and the glass broke—it means death to one of my household—'tis Dooley!"

Perplexed now, the missionary tries to disabuse her mind. He asks her, "Whoever told you such a dreadful thing?" Then he tried to prove it as only a suggestion of the devil's.

A woman with a heart large enough for two parents explains how she is struggling with her children's help to establish a home good enough for all, when Dooley loses his government job.

Heathlyn is interested, and shows it, when he says, "So I have understood, my good woman."

Mrs. Dooley goes on: "Well, thinking about the picture all day yesterday worried me. During the night I dreamt that Spencer gave me a telegram from my eldest girl, telling me to come along at once."

"Do not dwell upon it, Mrs. Dooley. If you continue in this frame of mind your faith in the grim lie will be realized, your prayer will be answered—tempt not God!"

A scream from Kathleen, the youngest, comes from the house front. The mother is first upon the scene with her ready-stick, and kills a big black-snake.

Mother and child, holding and clinging

to each other, sob patiently in excitement. The missionary carries the reptile and places it behind the fire, saying, "Dissipate the serpent's beguiling message; kill it with the same strength that you struck this!"

When the missionary left the house, after a cup of tea, he found that Mrs. Dooley still remained in the same state of mind. This she requested: "Next Sabbath ask the good folk to pray for me and mine. I'm a good Catholic, but believe in the prayers of all men."

Heathlyn passed a man on horseback at a more belated hour. He bid the time of night, but it was too dark, and the fog had made the voices husky; neither knew the other.

Spencer was on his way home with the mail for four homes; in one, a telegram:

"Come at once, father very ill indeed!"

A breaking, anxious heart throbs in the breast of that woman. Truth, God is the witness.

A mother with her ten-year-old daughter starts out that night on foot through ways where mud more than knee-deep has to be waded through in places, where a fallen

tree has to be climbed over—no star, no moon, only a fitful glimmer from a candle lantern. Twelve miles which took hours to cover. Others were asleep. The day is breaking when two souls—an honest wife and mother, a loving daughter—reach the hotel where the coach offers another day's test. Can man divide that which God has bound? Even His chastening only draws those love-links closer—Dooley died in her arms and passed to where he waiteth.

CHAPTER X

JOYS AND FEARS

MANY the bright spots to be found and enjoyed in this lovely world. Many the shafts of light which try to penetrate the clouds drawn from this world. Many more people enter our life with its varied wants than we think ; how much we owe to those of yesterday and those of to-morrow will come some day to our conscious understanding.

“ There is a packet on your plate, Mr. Heathlyn. I think that it is somebody's photo.”

The little maid of The Beech Boarding House always took a personal interest in the missionary's welfare. This evening her message is received by the outrider with a happiness which his face gives ample expression of ; he is more stiff than tired after his four days in the saddle.

What a neat little woman she was—not a thread nor a leaf was ever found on that strip of carpet in his room. Sometimes the missionary said that he believed his room was the tidiest in the house, and the answer was as generously returned, “You know, sir, that you are tidy yourself.”

Every Sabbath evening Jessie McClure, with her smart little outfit, occupied a place in the choir. Mr. Crumbles took quite a delight in telling the other girls that Jessie was too good for the forest, and much superior to many of the smart city ladies. She was a homely little creature with true brown eyes which sparkled from a well coloured setting; how modestly she sat in the front row beside the blind man who helped them all so much in their singing during those happy little church gatherings.

The morning following Heathlyn meets the little maid and thanks her, promising to show her the photo of his sweetheart.

“I am sure that everybody will love her. She is a gentle little creature; she does not remember her parents, but our Heavenly Father kept His unslumbering eye upon her.”

“ She must love you, sir ! Do you know that many of the women folk think that you are women’s champion ? ”

“ Miss Jessie ! I wish I was worthy of this great honour. How I fight with myself so that none will ever reproach me ; still, I am so often inclined to court woman’s good opinion that I am afraid I am very often much misunderstood, and women are so unselfish.”

A little later the missionary is seen to stop two or three times and gaze long and affectionately upon the picture of a face of much winsomeness which he carries in his hand.

“ Miss Jessie,” says he, “ what do you think of her ? Do you not think that this dear and loving face is the expression of a good, pure soul ? The home she enters will surely be a happy retreat.”

“ Oh, Mr. Heathlyn ! She looks like a lady who would put up with anything.”

With a hearty laugh Heathlyn merrily replies :

“ Yes, indeed ! She is going to put up with me. At least, she has promised to ! ”

“ Oh, sir ! I did not mean that. What I did mean was that dear, good face is a

type of true womanhood—one of those souls with a mission. Many poor, dispirited things would be satisfied with a word from her.”

The brightness and mirth is as readily exchanged for honest seriousness and composure in the man as he turns to the little housemaid.

“ You are right. Others see the same—she has many lovers of her own sex. I truly believe that women truly admire the woman who is content to spend her activity in those exercises which make for others’ happinesses.”

Quietly the missionary is turning away, when the little housemaid shows her nature of womanly kindness.

“ Sir ! Do you ever speak to Posie ? She is not a bad girl, though she will go out walking on Sundays with those young men from the railway-camp. The master says that she is off her head.”

Quick light of interest vivifies in his face as he turns for a moment to answer the maid.

“ Miss Jessie, I saw Miss Posie a few moments ago down on her knees polishing the linoleum. I do not remember ever

seeing her other than busy and industrious. Many a matron in the city would like to have such a good girl in the house."

"She shares the room with me, sir, and the only time I ever see her on her knees is when she is at work. Maybe it is her form of religion, and she does her duty to God by honest service to her employer."

The missionary turns away after promising to speak to the Church of England lay-reader, as she had told him that she was confirmed to that faith. Placing the cherished photograph in a secluded corner of his dressing-table, he bids it good-bye with a holy benediction. Then, with quick movement, he hurries away to the blacksmith's, where his horse is being shod. On his way down, he meets the Church of England bush representative: "Hello, Copely! Just been talking about you. Look out! Your wheels are going round!"

"Mr. Heathlyn, do not draw attention to the shape of my wheels. This gig has had much honest work, and that is how I managed to purchase it; when I bought it I noticed that the wheels were badly dished. I wish they would go round and wobble less. I hardly know what party in

the church I belong to : first I'm High, then I'm Low."

" Copely, old man, let the gig go. It is no use up here ; a day or two and you will find that even round wheels are impossible. What I wanted to speak to you about is one of your flock."

" Thank you very much, Heathlyn ! It is very good of you to take the interest in my people that you do. I suppose it is someone a distance afield ? "

" No, near home. There is a member of your Church working at the boarding-house where I am staying. No one takes much interest in her except another maid, who belongs to us ; and she says that her influence is nil—this I much doubt. Any way, Miss Posie Smart has reached that age in life where a little attention from young men plays a serious part in the daily round : her acquaintances are legion and her friends are few. Could you send along one of your Church-members to take her up ? "

Copely promises to tell Mrs. Winter and her girls to take an interest in Posie.

" Look here, Copely, that nag of yours would do more for you if you hacked him

about in here. Get Burns to shoe him with concave-shoes and a little heel on the hind-feet."

With two or three bounds the missionary is a little mud-besmattered as he springs into the forge.

"Well, Burns, have you fixed my mare up?"

"I only shod two hind feet!"

"Thank you very much. I do not remember having brought down more than that pair. No doubt she would be pleased to have others at times."

Two or three others enjoy the joke, and it is often repeated during the day.

"I'm sure that the mare shares your spirit, sir—she is a kind beast!"

Heathlyn quietly touches his untarnished spurs as he takes the bridle, saying, "No wonder, then, that she so often gets the goad of application."

"You don't use 'em much, anyhow; it is good to shake her timbers when the big ones threaten."

"Good-bye, Burns. Tell the wife that the Sabbath-school will be held in Crawford's kitchen next Sunday."

Another horse is now carrying the

missionary through those trying roads. She is a handsome Beeac-mare ; few horses could keep up with her stride of five and a half miles an hour walking pace. Reining in as he passes the soft-eyed milliner, dressmaker, and counter assistant, who is pensively gazing at a bare gum on the opposite side of the road, he quite startles her with his cheery address.

“ I say, Miss Harris, send down a little light refreshment to the church for me next Sunday.”

“ What do you mean, Mr. Heathlyn ? ”

“ What I say, Miss Harris. Last Sunday evening the lamps nearly went out.”

“ You do give such funny orders ; when I told Mr. Cowdell the other day that you were inquiring for ivory-polish he immediately wrote to Melbourne for it, then the same evening you went away with a pot of tooth-paste.”

Miss Harris languishingly gazed at the man who looked down indifferent'y upon her, as he said, “ Cheer up, Miss Harris ! ”

The young lady brightened, and explained how happy she was, and she thought that it was due to one man's humour that many clouds were lifted.

Heathlyn, with much gravity, yet much good humour, bids Miss Harris " Good-bye for the present," and turns his horse to the main-road, which leads to Frazer's. A few weeks ago Heathlyn and Willie Cooper had driven over two hundred bullocks up past Frazer's selection, and the graciously soft topping had attached itself to horse, coat, and leggings. What they left behind was about eighteen inches of soft gruel-like substance. Along this same track the outrider had raced Miss Billings up to Rook's last spring. Miss Billings thought that Heathlyn was an excise officer, and her confusion was great when she arrived a moment later and carried Mrs. Rook off into an inner room, as Heathlyn turned to the old man with these words, " You say that this is the only whisky you have in the house ; I do not think much of this stuff."

No doubt Mrs. Rook explained that the missionary was corresponding for them in an endeavour to prove the claim upon an estate of their son's, which had gathered with other intestate gleanings in the curator's keeping.

Frazers had had a little trouble lately,

and a daughter was now in hospital in Colac, so it was the missionary's duty to try lift the clouds from anxious minds.

"There are clouds enough ever resting upon this mountain range"; thus he almost speaks aloud—"everybody is so isolated from the world without. I do not wonder that clouds of doubt hang so heavily where brightness and hopefulness radiate in the contrast without hesitancy."

After his visit to Frazer's, he passes Ford with his dray. Ford is a cynic of little value to society; he always put himself out to be rude to anyone who was sensitive about good things.

"I say, parson, if I was the Almighty, I would put a better top on these roads; would not take much to create a difference, anyhow?"

Ford is now in a rut; he thrashes his horse until the animal lifts the wheels out of the hole, but with all his boast he does not try and remedy the thing he complains of. Many who follow Ford go into the same rut. It is just closing day when Ford pulls up his dray outside the saddler's shop. He goes in to have a new lash put on his whip. Heathlyn is in the shop chatting.

"I say, Ford, I thought that you were going to recreate the world? Why, you cannot put a lash on your whip; it is time you saw how much you owe to others."

Beside his plate a letter is lying; it is from Mrs. James, who is out with her people for the Easter and a few extra days.

"Ho! So James is not writing to his wife. No wonder that she is anxious, for he is not the man to neglect anybody or anything."

Saturday morning every alternate week you would find upon a narrow ledge of landing above the muddy back-yard the outrider, with boots, leggings, and riding kit surrounding him. All are being carefully cleaned for another start.

Breakfast over, a chestnut mare, sleek and clean, with almost a spring bloom upon its jacket, is waiting at the low picket-fence as saddle-bags and valise are buckled on. Its master chats with her all the time; then, bidding good-bye, or so-long to those coming and going to the store, he swings his oil-skinned frame into the saddle, and turns towards the outposts of his district.

Jessie McClure, with a couple of mats in

her hand, is whipping a post, as she calls to the outrider :

“ When are we to expect you home ? ”

The rider tries to turn in his saddle, but does manage to twist his neck a bit, as he answers :

“ We have a good many visits to pay this week ! We will not be home until Wednesday ! ”

Ungrudgingly the mare steps out to fulfil the heavy itinerancy, though a little wearily she returns on the Wednesday evening. Time is distance in a country where sometimes it takes three hours to climb seven miles.

Many calls were paid this day, which so quickly came to a close, and the new church building at the terminus could not be too long dwelt with. On they go to the turn down to James's selection—the spot he imagined was the best in the whole forest area.

Darkness is upon them both as they become enveloped in a mountain mist. They reach the old split-paling gate, and the rider gropingly feels for the wire hoop ; without dismounting he opens it and closes it. The horse conveys him to the front

of the sheds, where they part company. The horse to the belt of scrub in the home-paddock ; the rider to what ?

Heathlyn finds the house in total darkness. No door will move to his hand. At last he finds that the window to the detached kitchen will open sufficiently to admit his body ; this he wriggles through, to fall upon the floor. He has no matches ; these he had never before forgotten. Carefully he feels along shelf after shelf for a box. None on the dresser, the safe is padlocked, the drawer in the table is only full of ironing cloths, the long mantelpiece is decked with tins and all sorts of things, but never a match. Soft soot comes to his touch as his fingers search the top of the stove—vain the search ; so he drops four feet on to the wet grass without, and turns his steps to the men's hut, which is open to every cloud and fog, as the winds have forced its door.

Again the search begins. The men's hut had once been the best building on the selection -- ghosts of former occupants haunted its two chambers. The searcher's hand comes in contact with a box on the old slab which holds the clay lining of the

chimney on the one side, and many old tobacco tins and handy things which men employ. The box he opens but finds it empty. In intense darkness he continues his search. Spiders' webs collect upon his fingers, roaches run over his hand and fall to the earthen floor, splinters from the split lining threaten to invade his flesh—success is his, he thinks : in the pocket of a pair of old dungaree trousers he finds a tin match-box, it rattles encouragingly—feeling within he finds three little balls like peas ; the morning light revealed—pills ! Over the work-bench and into tins of boot-sprigs, nails, screws and tacks, his fingers wander—no matches ! Now turning to the inner apartment, he feels the bunk, upon which is a damp flock-mattress ; it certainly wanted much airing and teasing out, it is so lumped up. His hand glides over the mirror on the wall, and dropped to the top of the case clothed in some old dress-stuffs. A board with three nails arrests the movement—hundreds of match ends and an occasional cigarette-butt cling together. Carefully every one is feelingly dealt with, one by one drops to earth—none remain !

Rain had increased and the night was bitterly cold. Useless to go in search of the horse, so the missionary took out his lunch from his pocket and partook of a sandwich which he had intended keeping for mid-day on the Sabbath. After a good drink from the tank, he returned to the hut, and reached to the little loft over the bunk for two bags, which he drew over his feet, and prepared for rest ; he wound his watch, but could not see the time.

During the night the cold penetrated his oilers, so he hunted until he found a piece of hessian, which he swathed his shoulders with.

Morning finds him a little late in rising—he had overslept ! Finishing his sandwiches ; having a good sluice at the tap, he goes in search of the mare, who is rough and dirty. Ten miles lay in front of him before his first service at eleven ; then, eight more before he reaches the next place of meeting, where Sunday School goes in at two : he pushes along. Not until eight o'clock that evening did he have a cup of tea and a heartening meal, then another service to conduct.

Let us turn back to James's old hut and

see the ghosts of three men who once occupied it, as they entertain each other.

Bob and Charlie McKinn were on contract work, cutting scrub and ringing those days. They were good cattle men too ; if cattle were to be found they would bring them to light. More than this—they were considered rattling good fellows.

Bob was the life of the mutual improvement society which met one Saturday evening every month, and Charlie, his brother, could draw from his old fiddle a well timed measure to the pleasure of the shuffling feet which did not mind surmounting the knotty-floor, with its little gatherings of imported clay and cloy.

Picture these two men one evening rehearsing a dialogue which they intended to give the following Saturday night. It was Bob's original and humorous conception. James comes in with wet feet and removes his boots and socks. Holding the socks in his fingers over a cheerful fire, he turns to watch and listen to the McKinns. They have so interested him that he does not notice what is going on at the other side. They finish. He exclaims: "Is that all!" In his hand, within his finger

and thumb, an inch of wool is slowly smouldering.

The McKinns noticed the ends of the pair of socks ; for a few minutes, many hearty peals of laughter disturbed the normal quietness of their home.

Bob says : " Not much left for one's understanding, anyway ! "

While Charlie says : " It doesn't do to turn your back upon that which once you stood up in ! Wonderful how things go off in smoke ! "

A bright Australian youth in a few sequences of seasons occupied this hut ; he left the cigarette ends on the candlestick.

You can see him the morning that James called him to come and look at the comet. He did not turn out, but explained to Mr. James that " That old gag was tried-on years ago by the Warrnambool farmers. And he understood from the labour representative that the Rural Workers' Board would attend to all this phenomena."

Bursting with knowledge after having read the columns of " The Farmer's Weekly," he would dish up again many a chestnut. Once Heathlyn and Crumbles were paying a visit to the house when the

enlightened youth gave them the following riddle to solve :

“ How is it that the night falls and the day breaks ? ”

Crumbles was equal to it. Says he : “ Some people cannot see beyond their noses and some noses are pretty short : Why, when the sun sets it brings the night down, and the night coldly sits upon the earth until the warmth brings the day.”

This happened just before the Christmas Sports Meeting, and Heathlyn and Crumbles both attended the gathering of sportsmen who were that evening to fix up the programme.

It was just possible to see the faces of those assembled ; Williams's and Cameron's mixtures were being intensely drawn upon. Crumbles sniffs the smoke and turns to his companion with these words : “ You are wasting your time up here. These chaps think that they are in heaven, or else they think that what cures a porker will save them.”

Brady arose and with native eloquence proposed that Mr. Carlton take the chair, as he was the best sport in the room, and knew more about this sort of thing than

anybody else. This was duly seconded and unanimously applauded as the smoke lifted.

Then Brady is again on his feet, and occupies everybody's attention for over twenty minutes, telling Carlton and everyone else that he was quite sure that there was not another man in the room who understood so much as he himself did about how a meeting should be conducted.

Crumbles in an undertone: "That's a pity!"

Carlton arose to the occasion. He was not a brilliant speaker, but he tried hard to get rid of something which troubled him.

"I understand, Mr. Brady, that you said—er—er—er——!"

Brady, with a mischievous gleam in his eye, retorts: "I expressed myself a little better than that!"

"Yes, Mr. Brady, I ought to have told the men that you said—er—er—er——"

"Quite right, Mr. Carlton; under the circumstances it seems the best that you can do."

"But, Mr. Brady, I am very sorry for—er—er—er——"

"So am I, Mr. Carlton. I left 'er at home alone, and if we do not soon get to

business, she will have something plain to relate."

Many the bursts of hearty laughter when everyone was at an agreeable distance down the track from Carlton.

The secretary was a quick little fellow, just the sort of bustling little man who could make a country sports meeting a success when many more practical hands are ready to do the lifting and carrying. He rises to make his report, he was secretary last year, the year before ; in fact, he was the man who unfortunately lost the letter which had an answer of kindly encouragement from a vice-regal representative.

"I have secured a ten-gallon copper for the visitors ; a ten-gallon copper holds a lot of water."

Crumbles interjected : " Yes, ten gallons ! "

The secretary took no notice. He delivered himself of all the past had built up in experiences, finally winding up with these words :

" The River chaps had complained to him that the track was very bad last year ; he would suggest, that instead of cutting the ferns this time, that the track be plowed

and harrowed, thus killing the whole bird with the one stone ! ”

Mr. Crumbles rises to his feet and addresses the chairman. “ Mr. Carlton, why kill the whole bird ? I think we might try to keep some part alive. I would move that the bird be preserved.”

McMillen thought that it was very uncalled for : “ The River chaps don’t move that fast that they should complain.”

“ That’s just the trouble, Mr. McMillen,” says Crumbles ; “ they can’t move out of the bracken’s way.”

Carlton junior, who had been at an Easter gathering last year, is going to help everybody out of the difficulty. “ I have very much pleasure in seconding Mr. Crumbles’s motion. I do not know much about killing the bird that Mr. Jackson the secretary was talking about, but at the Highland gathering at Nurra Nurra last year they cut its throat I think early in the morning ; then it was hanged up to a gallows until the competitors with a wooden sword and they themselves blindfolded did their best to finish it. They tell me that they keep it up every year.”

At this there was a great rally. Mr.

Crumbles tried to get a word in ; all he was able to make be heard, was : " It ought to be on-cord ! "

Carlton, again rising, is permitted to explain that it was hanged by the feet on a hook and its feet tied with string, so that it could not get away.

Renewed cheers.

Carlton is still endeavouring to speak. He says : " We ought to pull up the ferns. Last year when I was running, a piece of fern caught my stride and ran into my foot. I can feel it now. I believe that it is growing ; mother says that the foot looks very dirty where it went in. "

Crumbles rises amidst much applause and calls upon Carlton senior to take a little livelier interest in the son's foot. Says he : " Do you expect that your son will be a Dead Bird for the Flying Stakes if you permit him to carry this extraneous attachment ? I move, Mr. Chairman, that he move this unwholesome attachment. "

Many, many happy moments passed as the bulls were reheard amidst much roaring, but the picnic meeting was a great success.

Before that meeting Heathlyn went to E. Colac for a couple of days. He had many

commissions to fulfil for the good folk of the settlements, and he was instructed to bring a goose home to the boarding-house for Christmas dinner.

After calling at five places, he at last found a tender bird in an auction market ; this he placed in a bag with a hole cut for the bird's head. Bravely he approaches the guard's van of that little narrow-gauge train. It is not very often that the station-master looks at this very insignificant set of coaches, but it is wonderful what he will try and do during the busy days. Innocently the bird is placed in a safe place ; then, the missionary moves along to lift some little ones up on to the platform in front of the corridors.

With a wild gleam in his eye, the station-master descends upon the missionary : " Is this your goose ? "

" Yes, indeed. Don't lose it ; I had to go to five places to secure it ! "

" Well, you know that you cannot carry birds alive in the guard's van ? "

" All right, Mr. Station-master, I will kill it."

" That won't do ; you will have to put it in a box."

Heathlyn takes the bag and bird, telling the irate and very loyal government servant that he will carry it himself.

"You can't, do you hear!"

"All right, old man. I wish that you had been as attentive over the rug a lady friend of mine lost. I think there is another goose in the van; I will give this fellow away."

The station-master strides back to the van, and Heathlyn gives the bird to two ladies to hide behind their skirts, then he goes back to the station-master to make more searching enquiries about the rug.

When they arrived at their destination the missionary is burdened with many parcels, also the goose. The cab from the boarding-house is waiting for him; into it he climbs, after presenting the proprietor with his Christmas goose.

The guard of the train draws near to the cab with another goose in a bag.

Heathlyn addresses him: "Where did you bury your bird?"

"Had it hanging, sir. Nothing like a little piece of string: it helps a bit at times. Why, my bird was quite comfortable on the lamp-hook outside."

CHAPTER XI

CONTRASTS

WHAT is the immediate concern of the settler or farmer seldom comes to the mind of the congested mass who crowd into the city to trade upon that which is thus produced.

Few denizens of the city know their geography sufficiently to tell where this or that place is, where this or that necessity of life is cultivated and cultured. The asset in its current economic value by trade and commerce appears to be the only thing of any consequence to those in the city, who wait for supplies; how the asset is arrived at is quite a thing outside their social environment.

Commonly the state administrators and the many so-called legislators pretentiously lavish and benignly smile upon the great-hearted men and true mothers and wives

when they present a little sop of encouragement by the way. Nobly and strenuously the battle of life is fought against prodigious difficulties and so-called "public perplexities." These full-souled men with like mates confront stern and vast opposition with little sedative for overwrought constitutions.

Night comes to the settler's home in its great generosity, commanding the wearied toiler to his couch. Note the contrast. See leaning and lounging on the city street in front of public edifices the people who claim to be the nation builders, the inner sides of their fingers stained with the extract of that supposedly sedative weed which the mighty minds of savages needed. Are these not part of that excitable element who count out the public speaker who fearlessly gives expression to the truth for the country's sake? The strained and immoral ear is tilted to hear any coarse jest or common satire upon all that which is pure and good. Youth soon accepts a habit of mooching and doddering gait as it succumbs to the condition it desires.

Tired the frame of the bushman as he lays his blackened and stained axe-blade

out of those hands similarly marked by the sap of strength which he has bled from the energy of forest life. Men of nerve and courage, with hearts which regularly beat beneath a slightly roached back, control a soul of virtues.

Crumbles accompanied Heathlyn sometimes upon his visits here and there, when a holiday offered itself; many the chats they had upon social matters.

Coming out of Colbert's bacon factory, Crumbles drew his companion's attention to the curing establishment:

"Queer, isn't it, that the man who smokes to cure his irritability continues to grunt, but the pig loses its grunt before it is cured."

Heathlyn told an experience of his own, which awakened in Crumbles the following quaint riddle:

"Mr. Heathlyn, what is the difference between the pig which smokes and the pig which does not smoke?"

After some thinking, Heathlyn said: "I give it up!"

Crumbles with a chuckle says: "That's what I did!"

The missionary meditates upon the

thoughts which Crumbles awakens in his mind, and as he so cogitates, he thanks God for the companionship of this city youth, who teaches and cheers and says that which can be agreeably repeated, for he wraps up all he manufactures in such neat parcels.

Crumbles is gaining much in his turn : his quick initiative readily acquires that gentle courtesy which is apparent in his fellow ; sometimes, he is quite severely dignified when circumstances suggest.

A quiet modesty and gentleness is evident about the children of the back-woods. True content of happiness is gained by those who endeavour unselfishly to share life's effort. Natural reverence and respect for parents is quickly developed ; there is a deep appreciation ever in mutual reciprocation between forebear and offspring ; there is family loyalty ever existing, and service is seldom directed by the one as against the other for any ulterior gains. Unfortunately at times this social harmony is broken by the contrast which at times a city cousin suggests ; maybe, a fugitive labourer in an ungracious way subtly lets drop the seed of that weed which is

best described as moral discontent—it does sometimes hold the ground.

These observations and many more were made by the missionary as he chatted to his interested listener.

Crumbles turns in his saddle with these words :

“ Mr. Heathlyn, some folk pay more attention to a dog's or a cat's wants than they do of their own children's. Is it because they do not truly understand the value of human life, or, is it because they do not wish to show their ignorance ? ”

“ Crumbles, old fellow, it is a good thing that God gives some people a little more money than others ; this enables some folk to purchase what they could never themselves impart, and some children would accordingly suffer in consequence.”

“ But, Mr. Heathlyn, why is it that some parents will spend more money upon a hobby, or upon a pastime, than they will upon their own offspring ? Surely they must place themselves at a low moral value when they imagine that an animal or an instrument is of greater consequence than their own progeny ? Lady Covey said in the tram one day : ‘ I cannot manage my

dear little Freddy ; nurse even says that he is very wayward, and it is impossible to take him out the same days I have little Flossy. Flossy is such an amiable little creature, but Freddy is quite jealous of him.' "

Heathlyn waxed eloquent for a few minutes, then summed it up thus tersely : " Flossy is a dog : it was perfectly created by God for its part and place. Freddy is a man, as conscious of imperfection as any son of man. Here, Crumbles, here is somebody's responsibility ; many inhuman associates refuse to accept of responsibility, yet, they claim to be free-willed. Mark the difference, Crumbles, with the children of the forest ; there is little they miss, there is much they learn."

" Yes, they gather more moss than the pampered and pandered rolling-stone of ceaseless entertainment."

" The Master of Men spent all His time in the affairs of men ; He came in His strength from a secluded corner, He learnt to make and mend, to reconstruct and edify that which was truly a social fabric, and to this end He never overthrew any good human institution. His building was

often attacked, still he accepted all that which necessarily existed—to-day the world of progressive races turns to that light which is ever being inspired. What a heritage is Christianity : an ever unfolding and evolving process of revelation ; and this—all from without the tabernacles raised to Moses, Elijah, John, or Paul or Peter—but by those who—Hear Him.”

Crumbles is like the man who has delivered himself of this address, now earnestly cogitating much that never before came his way. Everything interests the man with interests beyond himself, nothing interests the man with all his interests self-centred, and the man who sees furthest is he who stands furthest off, as he gathers a mightier perspective. Some people want to see so much, and get so close to that which they see, that they become but a small part of the thing they would be imagining they fully review. It is a bad thing to be entirely involved in anything without some motive power in its organic doing.

Again the missionary addresses his disciple : “ The true pleasure of existence, Crumbles, lies in the knowing the worth

of our existence to other beings : mere existence is never of much utility."

Conversation is quietly turned into other channels, and the young man from Hyland's selection tells how he used to stroke the hair of the horse the wrong way.

Says Heathlyn : " Like people, the hair of the horse grows both ways."

" There you are wrong, Mr. Heathlyn, for I have found that the hair upon a horse's pelt grows the way it is wanted."

To-day is a public holiday, and both horsemen turn their faces toward the sea-coast, where they find Cabal the school-teacher from The Gap lolling on the sands with an uncovered novel in his hands ; this much-used cheap publication he had found in the room he occupied at the hotel.

" Good-day, Cabal ! Are you going to collect the nautilus and other rare shells here ? "

" No, indeed ! I am out for a little sunning ; but if you are in search of curios you will find the petrified remains of a fox up there in a hollow of that sand-dune."

The horses are let go on the tussocked hillsides after having refreshed themselves

at the little flowing stream of fresh water which uncovers a new pathway as fickle energy becomes so purposed.

Climbing the dune the explorers find the bleached, not petrified, remains of the head and vertebra of a bird.

"Crumbles, what would you say it is the remains of?"

"Well, Mr. Heathlyn, it is nice and white, but it is not petrified. I would say by the lever on the beak bone that it belonged to a large sea-bird; no fox would want it to lift a scent, no matter how heavy."

The skull of the albatross is quietly deposited in the missionary's pocket, then they both return for a few minutes' chat with Mr. Cabal, who interests them in many things of very little value. When Cabal left the district he was presented with a purse of sovereigns: this helped to pay his billiard score. He was a great favourite with the indolent; his school was a failure—many cheap editions were read while the children endeavoured to translate the signs upon a blackboard. Sometimes more than an hour was wasted; yes, actually wasted in arithmetic. The mental giant awoke to his responsibilities and noticed that the

children were playing "Noughts and Crosses." With an eloquent sweep of a very unhealthy cloth, the board would be wiped, then a poetical sentence drawn from the novel he was reading would be placed upon the board. Those who could, again made an effort to parse or analyse. When Heathlyn left The Forest another teacher occupied The Gap school-house, and he found much fallow to cultivate.

Crumbles and Heathlyn both went over for tea to Mr. Crisp's family. There school-teachers and the education department came in for much criticism.

Says Crisp : " Why, we have been applying for a school-teacher for eleven years. My father before me in another district had much the same experience when I was a lad. Now the people who are being brought out to this country and wet-nursed in closer settlements get the teachers that we should be getting. My father has left behind him five sons : two are on the land, two have paid many a pound and cannot obtain a block ; still they help others reclaim theirs."

" The administration is good no doubt for those in the congested city areas ; it

is highly reasonable that the people of the cities are taught something of value. All the same, Mr. Heathlyn, it would help us with what lies immediately before us if our children had the same opportunities."

Thus they chatted on. John Crisp, who was ten years old, explained how he had for the last two summers ridden six miles for a little mental loading, and unburdened himself with his younger sister when the sun set. John could do almost anything that his strength would permit ; still, he was one of nineteen children who had not the opportunity to learn all that the present age required—these nineteen of school age living on five holdings.

"I wonder, Mr. Heathlyn, would the Catholic School risk it out in these ends if they obtained the Per Capita Grant ; so far, they have not faced it where the poor settlers reside ? "

Heathlyn promised to make it his business, when next in Melbourne, to call upon the Secretary of Education. Upon this, he was assured that if he was successful he would have raised an ever continuing memorial to his name.

Crumbles told an experience of his when

he was a boarded-out boy in Gippsland. In Woorayl a fine man who occasionally displayed a little weakness was appointed to the school where Crumbles attended. One day when those subtle desires of taste were contending, he determined to conquer. Taking a piece of chalk, he drew upon the black-board a bottle with an attractive looking label upon it, but the name of the contents was not there. Turning to the children, he said, " You will notice that I have drawn a certain object on the board ; to apprise me of its contents, what is necessary for me now to draw ? "

Crumbles quickly replied : " It is best left as it is ! "

" Boy," says the master, " I do not wish you to tell me what to do ; but, what is it I have failed this time to draw ? "

" You have forgotten to draw the cork ! "

That lesson was never lost upon the teacher ; he is now active in a city school.

The school for this district came along all right. The slight delay of eleven years was reasonably explained away by the sophists at the head of affairs.

" When all sides are considered," said Crisp, " it did not seem fair that we should

expect a school inspector to come so far away from home comfort as to spend a day with us outlaws so far removed from all that which is more generally entertaining. The day I first applied I promised to conduct him in so that we could fix upon the site ; to leave it to Cody and Smith would be to leave it indefinitely fixed upon. Smith wanted the iron hut, Cody wanted his old cheese-house ; now, you come along and select two acres of the water-reserve. The inspector has my sympathy, the administrators of the department my pity ; yet, they are very patient teachers—at least, they impart the virtue.”

The school-house was built, the two acres were fenced by the five families living nearest. Heathlyn was again elected a deputation to intercede on behalf of the people at Beech Glade ; they had only written for a teacher in the first instance seventeen years before. Since then many places had changed hands owing to the fact that there was no school. One inspector had reported that he could not see why some of the children could not come to the school-house five and a half miles on top of the mountain, yet he himself refused to

go down and meet the people, as it would waste a whole day. "Mind you," says McHurdle, "there's a lot can be missed in a day."

When Heathlyn overlapped upon another missionary's district to take up the petition for a school-house at Beech Glade he found evidence of much neglect.

At Hawthorn's, Jim is fencing, and seems quite surprised that anyone should stop to chat. Upon this he comments quietly.

"Mother and my sisters are all at home. The last visitor we had here was the Reverend Thorn, who came along three years ago. We miss his visits—he is in England now—he walked out here from Colac after the big fire."

A nice, intelligent and happy group of children are in the house. Mrs. Hawthorn welcomes the outrider, and he suggests that he read a little passage from the Bible. Not having his own book in his hand, he asks for theirs.

After much searching a little oilcloth-covered Church of England Prayer Book comes to light. Its leaves are damp, its type musty, its cover dusty.

Says Mrs. Hawthorn as she quickly wipes it :

" Mr. Thorn gave me this after the big fire ; it has been carefully put away ever since."

Bending the cover in his hands, the book reveals to the missionary's eyes its heart's appeal from the fifty-first psalm. Quietly the children are instructed to kneel when the prayers are recited, shyly they glance around occasionally to see if they were in the right posture.

Many the explanations offered by the mother : " You know, they do not often go to church ! "

" When were you all last at church ? " says the missionary.

With a distressed look upon her face, the mother tells the missionary that only once in twenty years had they had anything like a service together.

" I suppose you keep them all up in their reading ? "

" Oh, dear me, no, sir ! The only reading that comes to this house is the auctioneer's stock report and the pieces of paper wrapping up parcels."

With surprise the missionary looks upon

those fine, attractive looking faces, as he enquires :

“ Of course, they all have had some schooling ? ”

“ No, sir, that we cannot claim—not one of the seven can write ! Their father is too tired when the day’s work is done. We hope to sell out soon and buy another place, to give them a better chance.”

“ It will be hard on the older ones, Mrs. Hawthorn. But they should at least overcome any difficulties.”

“ Mr. Heathlyn, my next-door neighbour, Mrs. O’Neill, says that she has almost forgotten what a priest is like. One came through this way about seven years ago collecting for a mission to the poor in Madrid, and the other day a friend of hers wanted a subscription for a cathedral in Killarney. ‘ The churches do a good work,’ says Mrs. O’Neill.”

“ You are certainly to be pitied. One of your bishops the other day warned his synod that it would be unwise to cut the painter from the old country, for there was not an Anglican diocese which had not been subsidized from the mother church. Yet, here his lay-reader is paying twenty-

two pounds a year rent to that diocese out of ninety pounds per annum stipend. Who obtains the mission funds ? ”

“ No wonder,” remarks Mrs. Hawthorn, “ that he cannot come along this far—seventy pounds will not go far to keep man and horse ! ”

It was an unhappy report that Heathlyn brought home with him that evening for Crumbles’s consideration.

Crumbles makes no apology for the parents ; he admits that the children did not know of all which lay before them.

“ Things are a bit bad down there anyway ; if they liked they could all learn to read. When I was with the sewage gang there was a man there who could neither read nor write. He took a live interest in union matters and taught himself to read print. One evening he had to preside at an election meeting, and a couple of telegrams were handed to him. ‘ Gentlemen,’ says he, ‘ I have some apologies here, and as I have left my glasses at the Farriers’ Club, you will have to excuse me.’ He was a right down smart fellow, that—the glasses he left at the Club were those you place between the lips and

beneath the nose. He reads writing now, and, no doubt, will be soon attending to other folks' education."

Captain Caper arrived to take charge of the Big Tree Hill school-house. This little split-paling school-house was highly honoured. Caper was not two weeks in the district before he was fairly well known. The auctioneer in recommending a hack at the sale referred to the Captain as an authority upon horse-flesh.

That evening, in the parlour of "The Spider," he dwelt eloquently upon "His Seat"; from then onward he was known as 'The Jockey.

Sunday always found him the centre of many admirers, as he related his experiences. During the week he had to stay at Flynn's. Miss Flynn came up to the store one afternoon with the news of The Jockey's most recent exhibition: "He can't lose his seat. The grey filly lifted him; he flew like an angel over the fence into the calf-paddock. There he arrived upon the backs of two poddies that were quarrelling over the whey. They got such a surprise that they slipped from under him as he claimed the bucket by sitting in

it; this tilted and he bravely found a seat on the muddy ground, which he stuck to until the mud dried."

Flynn comes into the bar as The Jockey swaggers into the billiard-room.

Says Flynn: "A rale dacent man that. Indade it was foine the way my Patsey and 'The Jockey roide thergither. Patsey's the bouy for fun, and he tould 'The Jockey to climb up behoid the ithar day when he was passing the schule. 'There was my bouy with a foine new broom, now and agin, tickling the colt—he jumped—'The Jockey behaved dacently indade; seizing my Patsey, he slid down to the ground, but ne'r a bit of Patsey touched the mud."

Heathlyn met Flynn at the meeting of two tracks one day, and he asked him which was the best.

"Well, Mr. Heathlyn, one is a bit better than anither; sometoimes I take this one, sometoimes I take another—I always think the ithar is best."

Duly posted on the wall of Kemp's Track School-house was the timetable, but Stevens the teacher rather preferred outdoor exercises than confinement in an eighteen by eleven unlined building.

Many very interesting excursions the teacher arranged ; but, there were children who really had all the walking to do that was necessary—when Pansy and Brindle take it into their heads to hide their calves the morning of the excursion there are laddies' legs that are pretty tired. Grudgingly the mothers gave up their salt-jars and pickle-bottles.

Jimmy Richards is just getting away with the cork from the vinegar jar when his mother appears in the store-room.

“ James, what is that you have in your hand ? ”

“ Only this cork for Mr. Stevens. Percy Winter says that they have the bottle which will fit it.”

“ If Mr. Stevens wants corks as well as holidays, he ought to go back to Melbourne. I will chat the matter over at Mrs. Winter's this evening. Give me the cork, James, and find a stick that will do.”

Tidying up after tea, Mrs. Richards and James went to call upon the Stevenses, as the missionary was just then staying with them.

Heathlyn is sitting upon a log near the

garden gate. Ruth Winter is making a dismal effort with the violin.

“Is that you, Mr. Heathlyn? Is there anyone inside?” Quite an unnecessary set of questions, though when we consider Ruth’s music it seems reasonable.

The door is open and Mrs. Winter appears at the opening: “Come in, neighbours, and listen to Ruth; Mr. Heathlyn went out because he had a headache. Mr. Stevens says: ‘If Ruth learns from a good teacher and improves by patient practice, that she will be a famous player.’”

Very soon the cows all pass in turn along the passages of the respective minds’ eyes; then the horses and other beasts. At last the interesting activities of the daily round are recounted, until Percy, who is busy with his lessons, becomes the centre of attraction. The cork and bottle both occupy a little time.

Mr. Stevens has to explain why it is that good school time is being wasted; and he explains that if preserving that which life described is a waste of time, then he saw no need for such activity.

“Mr. Stevens, my boy’s legs have plenty

of exercise ; his fingers don't seem to handle the pen as well as they should."

" Mrs. Richards, it is wonderfully interesting to me. Sometimes the children surprise me in all they know about the things of nature. I'm learning every day."

With a cheery laugh, Mrs. Richards turns to Mrs. Winter : " Did you hear that. Why, our lads and lassies had quite a long study of the bush and its contents before the teacher was appointed ; did they not, Mrs. Winter ? There is something else they want to know now. I thought that the teachers came here to teach the children, not to be taught ! "

Heathlyn coming in is appealed to, and snakes, birds, and insects pass in thrilling seances before the little group of interested listeners. The missionary did not try and specialize, but for some time he held the floor. Snakes' eggs he had destroyed, snakes' legs he had examined ; emues he was sure had rudimentary wings, some had nothing more than a muscular activity. On he went until he told them how he was carrying some eggs in his mouth from a nest, and one broke to the release of a young bird.

Finishing up, he said : " Now I am going to ask you a question that an inspector of a Gippsland school asked the children : What is the last day-bird to call out at night ? "

Everybody said the bird they thought ; the majority said the Willy-wag-tail, two said the Kookooburra, one the water-birds, one the curlew.

" Well," said Heathlyn ; " according to the inspector, the bird of Australia which is a day-bird and the last to call out, is the Rooster. You might not believe it, but there were children in that school who never heard a rooster call out at night, though they knew it was the mate of the Lady who brings the eggs."

CHAPTER XII

CONFLICTS

HEATHLYN had been sitting for about one hour during the evening waiting for a solitary rabbit which had appeared over in the cocks-foot paddock. Returning to the house where he had been temporarily boarding, he placed the old gun carefully in the corner.

“ Little chance of rabbit fricassee, Mrs. Morrison. I have been out shooting rabbits.”

“ Did you get any ? ”

“ No.”

“ Hem ! ” says the good woman of the house : “ You said that you had been shooting them.”

Very soon the missionary's chance came to return this quiet little shot.

“ I would not like to see you go without

a fricassee, Mr. Heathlyn : did you ever kill a fowl before ? ”

“ Mrs. Morrison, would you expect me to cut its tail off ? ”

The room which was let to the missionary was snug and comfortable, and everything was done by Mrs. Morrison to make his stay in the house pleasant. The window looked out upon the back verandah where the bower-birds enjoyed the crumbs, and where they called and played in the early mornings. Sometimes these timid and handsome creatures would dance into the room when the door was slightly opened.

Between door and window upon the wall under the verandah was an ugly fat-mark which the frying-pan had made when the men were batching—this to Mrs. Morrison’s displeasure, though she said nothing. Below this mark the enamel dish stood invitingly upon a stump to all before meals, while a towel a little brown in the centre floated from a nail on the verandah post.

Morning light is softly penetrating through chink and opening of wall and window when a low growl and snarl awakens the sleeping watchman over moral affairs. In quick answer an angry cat

answers the challenge ; there is a hurried scuffle, the blue-birds excitedly cease to call their hissing caw and fly away to the fence about the pig-stye.

Morrison is about with the day : religiously he turns to the pails and pans which lean along the wall, having drained overnight, after the scalding ; these are all wiped about the edges.

Luke the dog, with his paw upon a rabbit, is gazing into the eyes of an angry cat ; occasionally he lifts the corner of his lip, displaying a brutal grin. With every particle of fur upon her vertebra upstanding, Felie answers the challenge from a safe distance—cruelly had she been treated.

Morrison is interested : “ Luke, lay down ! ”

The big cattle-dog growls threateningly, and the cat edges round as their master takes the rabbit away, which is now quite a tender morsel. Close beside the kitchen door it is hanged, and two dumb beasts lugubriously sit beneath in wondering expectancy, with quickened appetites.

Mrs. Morrison is drawing the embers together, and swings an already warm

kettle over the added sticks. Turning to the frying-pan, she meets her good man, with the kerosene-bucket, on his return from feeding the pigs.

"Wife, Heathlyn will not be done out of his rabbit after all. I called Clem; tell him to skin it for you when he comes down. Luke and I will go for the cows."

Morrison explained that the cat had brought it in, and that the dog had taken it from the cat, so he thought it was legally right to have it dealt with by the household. "You must know, wife, that it is now the eighth day that we have been endeavouring to dispose of Pansy's calf, and it is likely to last another couple—no doubt Mr. Heathlyn is a little tired of perpetual veal."

Morrison, with a piece of hay-band fastened to Luke's collar, goes out of the garden gate, sullenly followed by the disappointed brute. Luke is soon back and joins the interested cat, which sits in the same spot, and it will not move when Mrs. Morrison's flounces strike it.

Clem is soon about, and after the morning salutations he naturally enquires about the rabbit. He is instructed to take it and

divide it between the two animals. He promises to do so after the milking.

"That will not do, Clem! Morrison is now away with the cows, and by the time he comes in the creature will be eaten."

Morrison is having his early breakfast a quarter of an hour later, when his wife says: "The animals got that rabbit. I knew that they would get it; if you want to keep things from that cat, don't hang them on that nail again."

"If Clem had attended to it at once it would have been all right. Luke seemed to know that if he did not hurry home he would miss it—he's a sulky brute."

Mrs. Morrison brightly attends to her man's wants, as she says: "I think he got back in time for a fair share."

"Wife, if you knew that the cat would get it from that nail, why is it you did not take it down?"

"I was too busy myself with your breakfast to trouble about taking it down. You can blame Clem."

The experience was never again alluded to by Morrison, except one morning in awakening Clem he said, "Don't let us lose another rabbit."

Morrison came in one day from the factory with the news that everybody intended to go to the coast for a pic-nic on Easter Monday ; most of the cows would be turned out. Mrs. Morrison enters into the spirit of the thing, for it was the first pic-nic that the settlers had had together except the sports meetings at Christmas. But the poor woman was quite hurt when she was told not to bother about cakes, only to bring her biggest pot of lemon and melon jam, and plenty of cream to place upon her good home-made bread and scones. Not a currant would Morrison have mixed. Not a tongue would he have ordered. Said he : " What do people want with cakes, and they are keeping a five-pound cheese for sandwiches at the factory for me ? "

What a lovely day it was ! Campbell and Archie Morrison, both home from school, have the old horses groomed up, and the newly blackened harness is looking quite smart—the peeping straw from the collars was carefully covered on Saturday, and where a rivet or piece of fine wire would draw ends together these were used ; the old milk wagon had another seat—its

coir fibre did certainly expose at edges and ends, but an old tartan rug was divided between the two cushions. All is ready. The missionary and Campbell are to ride.

“Do not forget the tin in the hollow log at the hill top; the coachman left it yesterday.”

Saying this, Heathlyn joins Campbell Morrison, who is anxious to meet certain young ladies who will also be in the saddle.

Such a day! Such a road! Such a twister is this and that rut.

The pioneers deserved better roads. The tray-wagons groaned and creaked, the odd pieces of wire were strained and straightened between harness and weight. Sometimes there was enough room to pass a slower pair of horses; the elders exchanged compliments cheerily, modestly the conscious children peeped bashfully at each other as their respective parents said: “‘There’s Archie and Jessie.” “‘There’s Maud and William.”

Two solid hours to cover six miles. Mind you, the children did enjoy the three chain opportunity for a trot which occurred once. Here McMillen’s pole broke. No one was about to help him; he and his

arrived an hour later than the others—everybody went over to see how he had fixed it up : his pleasure was none the less for the mishap.

“ Gude thing indeed that it happened so. It wou’ ha’ been a leetle disappointin’ twa be late wi’ tha milk a’ tha factory.”

What a show of good things indeed ; even Mrs. Morrison proudly opened the sweets in Mr. Heathlyn’s tin. Her jam came in for much comment, while Morrison advertised the cheese to such an extent that there was none left.

Games were shyly begun and more heartily sustained.

Morrison and some of the men drew from their pockets a few pieces of fishing line ; with his, Morrison is soon seated upon a ledge tempting the parrot-fish and leather-jackets. Everybody warned Morrison against sitting on the perch he had chosen.

A big roller came along. Morrison at this moment was interested in a nibble. Everybody looked for Morrison, a couple of the men ran out to lend him help—there he was, like Father Neptune, with kelp and fibre gracefully swaying from his head

and shoulders—helplessly he had to submit to the undertow. When they landed him, he quietly withdrew for a quieter hour.

Morrison always knew best. Two or three sad fatalities had occurred on this coast before ; this he knew, this they had all warned him of. From that day he changed.

George Thwaites and the missionary are having confidences. George is an industrious man. He did not have much to show as his own, for had he not been the breadwinner for mother and two others for the past four years ! His brother is now able to do his part.

Millie Coles and George had had more than a passing fancy for one another when boy and girl—this had now ripened into a closer attachment ; but Mrs. Coles thought that she knew what was best for Millie. Millie's father had also been moved by the arguments which Mrs. Coles had so often put forward.

The missionary is much interested, and coming to a halt, he looks back upon the group of women who are busy getting tea ready ; he especially picks out one.

“ George, you are going to have her.

She is really a proper sort of mate for you : I hope that she will have the happiness that is hers unaffected."

Heathlyn did not know Millie's mother as well as he imagined. The day he faced her with the great problem she was in one of her best humours, she did not discourage him ; instead, she rather encouraged him.

" You take a mighty interest in my Millie, Mr. Heathlyn. I always thought that you admired her, but from what you say now I'm afraid that George better watch you. When Millie's father and I left Nurra Nurra station as man and wife, we had thirty pounds between us : for twenty-six years we have battled along, until you see what two energetic people can build up if they are evenly yoked. Now my girl is not meant for that kind of thing. She never knew what it was to face what we faced. She can teach most girls almost anything—no girl in this district can do more in house or yard ; but, Mr. Heathlyn, my girl is not going to be a selector's wife. It suited me, it will not suit her, and she knows more than I did at her age, and that is the reason I say it."

Heathlyn did not know exactly how to face the position now, but he was loyal to George.

A change came for George Thwaites a little later, and no one thought that any mistake was made when he was chosen as foreman of one of the big mills.

Mrs. Coles was away with her married son's wife for a few weeks—she had point-blank refused to let "the Thwaites affair" go on. Millie had threatened to go to service and marry away from home.

Mother and sisters Millie had in plenty; her brothers at home gave their consent, and Dad let things go on, only fearing Mrs. Coles's return.

Millie's many admirers mustered for the wedding. One girl friend made the wedding-cake, three tiers high; it was perfectly decorated and tastefully the knots and other symbols forwarded by a Melbourne confectioner were placed upon it—few young ladies ever had such an excellent cake to cut. The day before the wedding, quite a host of friends came along and decorated the long kitchen and the sitting-room.

"Dad was up to his neck in it," said

Millie's younger brother ; " he had a white tie on."

Muddy, heated, and cheery, the minister and Heathlyn entered the house after their twenty miles' ride.

Andy Ferguson, with the smartest buggy to be obtained in the district, is accompanied by George and his brother. The two grey ponies in the lead are a little speckled with dirt ; but, their favours gleam from their strappings, and the brown horses are in likely comparison, though with many hairs turned.

" Oh ! I wish that mother would come," says Millie.

Though heavy rains had been falling the week before, mother did swim her horse over the river ; she turned up !

Wet to the waist, having had to force the brute along at times to avoid a floating log : she managed it !

" I meant to be here ! " Happy tears in her eyes, she clasps her girl to her, and the two quickly withdraw to better understand one another.

The true pride of the mother was never wanting that day ; chastely and charmingly her house was decorated. All the very nicest people in the district were there

with little presents. The sitting-room had an arch of clematis which drooped in glistening splendour as they touched the young bride's cheeks ; soft ferns and foliage softened the prim walls where two or three enlargements of older generations hanged—the house was sweet and fragrant from door to door.

“ Neighbours, I do not deserve it. You seemed to understand my girl better than her mother.” After these words, all who could entered the inner room behind the speaker.

Mr. Coles, in responding to the toast, which was drunk in various soft cordials, said : “ Friends, our girl starts better than her mother did. She and I went along to the parson from Nurra Nurra station many a mile ; seems to me that the parsons will come any distance now to hitch folk up—the business can't be paying. I am pleased you all got your way ; there is more than George about who thought a lot of our girl. I hope things are equal and all will be happy.”

Heathlyn accepted the kindly banter from all sides as he pulled the girths on his and the minister's saddles. Turning to

the comrade of that twenty-mile return journey, he said, "I hope that those two will remain as well pleased with to-day's job as I now feel."

Tired and stiff, the two, after a hearty meal with Mavis in instant attention throughout, turn for a few minutes' chat over the glowing fire in the front room. Others are in the room; everyone is on the tip-toe of excitement about the bush nursing scheme. Heathlyn finds a notice of the meeting for himself.

Crumbles called the evening of the meeting for Heathlyn, and they went together to the Mechanics Institute. There is quite a big crowd there when they arrive.

The florid Mr. Payne the butcher is holding forth about the pathway: "It is quite time that a little gravel was put on the footpath. When the governor's lady comes into The Forest to fix this scheme up she will leave her shoes in the mud."

Passing at the moment is the visiting American Dentist; he wants to know what has caused the excitement. It being duly explained, he makes a comment:

"If there is a thing that is very necessary, it is an institution to promote such work."

Payne in his breezy way says : " There is one thing, anyway : she will not torture anyone."

" Mr. Payne," says the dentist, " if you are twitting me, I would say that I relieve Payne."

Crumbles of course draws everybody's attention to the dentist's meaning.

The door is opened from within, and the procession slowly file in, after removing as much mud as it was possible to get rid of on the step edge.

The chairman is soon smilingly in his place, with the bustling and important secretary fussing and gushing about ; those who like to figure conspicuously in little places always make many burdens for others, as well as themselves.

Minutes and correspondence being dealt with, the local doctor rises to make a statement. After outlining a programme which he thought would be of some value, he gave it support in the following words : " I have been in correspondence with the head of the movement in the city."

Our good old man rises to the occasion : " I'm mighty suspeccious," says he ; " why should the dochter be writin' ! "

The doctor does not take it all as comfortably as one would have thought he would ; he turns upon the old man with a snarl, using these words : “ How dare you, sir, make such imputations.”

The little banker is on his feet for a few minutes supporting the doctor, but the old man ignores this speaker. Again he turns to the chairman : “ Meester Chairman, I’m mighty suspicious.”

The doctor calls upon the chairman to note the old man’s remarks : “ Am I to be insulted like this ? ”

The chairman, who knows the old man much better than the doctor, acts cautiously ; turning to him, he begs of him to explain his meaning.

With a twinkle in those Highland fighting eyes, he rises in response.

Says he : “ I’m mighty suspicious of the dochter’s writin’ : dochter’s writin’ is not aye the best ; sich letter writin’ is onfair.”

“ How dare you, sir ! ” says the irate doctor.

“ My gude dochter, permit me to apologize.”

The doctor, who is now in a towering

rage, asks the chairman for protection.

The chairman, who is enjoying it all as much as everybody else excepting the little banker and the secretary, commands the old man to apologize to the meeting.

"Aye mon, I wi'. Ye ken tha dochter ha' been correspondin' wi' they executeeve in tha city; I dinna' think it at a' right when we ha' a secretary o' oor oon. Na doobt he did it a' in ignorance; I'm verra sorra tha' he did not knaw better. I trust that tha' apologee wi' be understoo'!"

The doctor, without rising, said a great deal which was not by anyone appreciated, so the old man again rose.

"Meester Chairmon an' my mony freans, I think a muckle lot of our dochter: he makes me think. Ye canna' be o'er cautious just noo. I think that tha less the dochter ha' to doo wi' the matter the better; anither dochter wi' be here in a day or twa."

Then, turning directly towards the doctor, he said: "Look ye heare, my big monny, bide a wee, an' ye'll ken more a' me."

After this the meeting went on happily until the banker proposed that the bush-nurse only attend those cases that the

executive deemed necessary, or the doctor recommended.

“ Came I heare to larn this, wou’ ye let a body to dee on the roadside ; wou’ ye let a body be waitin’ for naught ? ”

The wisdom of this remark was long after remembered. Andy Ferguson rode only eighteen miles with a nice hack to bring the nurse along to a neighbour of his—the nurse did not go, though Andy waited for four hours.

The Temperance folk had been fighting a battle against the granting of new licenses. To keep their members together they had a lodge formed ; every first Tuesday in the month they met to enjoy a programme in accordance with a syllabus they had agreed upon.

This evening which impressed itself indelibly upon Heathlyn’s mind was when Crumbles told the following story.

He tried to evade his turn by offering to pay forfeit, but this they would not hear of.

Crumbles rises and immediately claims much attention.

“ Friends, I’m out of practice. When I used to stand at the corner of Swanston

and Flinders Streets it was then my pleasure to keep myself posted up in all the questions and happenings of the moment which conspicuously favoured the 'Evening Herald.' Now, my friends, I would rather tell you a story. I would not persuade you to believe it, but the moral might be good.

"Well, you all know the old Survey Camp at the bend of the river, where Evans thought that he had found Gelli-brand's remains. Down there near the cascade an old black wallaby used to hop along feeding, then it would mount the little hill overlooking the camp when the men were at their meals. The men used to place upon the edge of their pannicans the pieces of bread they were eating. One day young Stanley lost his hat with its broad blue band. Look as he would, he never could find it, until one morning one of the others who was on his way to fill the billycan called him.

"There was the old man kangaroo standing below the falls dipping the hat into the water and then quenching his thirst therefrom; now and then, he stripped a piece of the rim off between drinks. A few days later his lady turned up with her little

one in her front pocket ; what surprised the men at the camp was that the little thing stuck to the blue ribbon, pinning it to the skirt of its mother's pouch."

Everyone thought that the story was an appropriate yarn to be told at such meetings, and that it showed that the baby kangaroo did wish to cling to the blue ribbon for mother's sake.

This little band did not relax their vigilance ; the publican himself admitted that their very existence was good for him, as it made him keep his business up to the mark.

"Why," said he, "they call them Wowsers ; so they are too. The name itself first became attached to a medicine Dr. Livingstone thought of great efficacy. Yes, those fellows are out for good."

Bland was wanting a railway siding below the sale-yards to serve the upper end of the township, so he summoned a meeting for the following Tuesday evening.

The day preceding and the evening were wet indeed.

McKaldie came into the bar and suggested that the meeting be put off until another night. The auctioneer's agent was there,

and he thought it wise to do so, as it was not at all likely that those most interested would put in an appearance.

As no one had acquainted the caretaker of the hall, he lit up and placed a fire in the meeting-room.

Five business men much more interested in the affairs of the other end turned up. After waiting for a considerable time, Mr. Flapper was duly appointed to take the chair.

Much discussion was indulged in, and Cabal moved the following proposition :

“ That this meeting appoint a Press correspondent, and that the correspondent duly publish the holding of this meeting, and that owing to the lack of interest in the matter of making an application for another siding, that this meeting deem it expedient to recommend to the Railway Standing Committee that any application which may now be in existence be not further considered.”

When a brief report appeared in a neighbouring paper ; and again, when the account for hall rent came in, it was not wise to say too much to Bland.

CHAPTER XIII

“ RECONCILIATION ”

THOUGH Muskvale folk more often saw the missionary than many other people, still, many more houses more often covered him at night. Flora and Flora's mother helped him in many ways, and never failed to encourage him in his work.

There was no misunderstanding existing in that house. The handsome daughter was never made conscious of being other than a true friend to one of God's little ones ; the healthy and happy outrider knew the value of her friendship, and to her he had always confided his hopes. Flora had met the little lady who helped inspire the effort of the man who was pleased to remain a couple of years in his Damascus until his faith had mellowed.

There is the sound of a horse's hoofs upon the planked entrance to the selection.

Flora no more knew this horse's measure in stride from many others ; but, this she knew—intuitively came to her a sense of happiness when that particular horse, which carried that particular rider, made approach to her home.

In a few minutes the missionary is inside the house, telling the inmates that the director had ordered him to another field. He is not either pleased or disappointed as he reviews his experiences of the past. He is not at all self-satisfied or placidly indifferent. He is not going to judge, but he does that evening make wonderful discrimination in recounting certain interesting experiences.

Miss Flora is reconciled ; in fact, she says : “ Mr. Heathlyn, no one will be better pleased than I am when I learn that you are in full command.”

Patiently the man who believes he has a mission tries to explain that he cannot see the necessity for any artificial fashioning. He does not in any way endeavour to overthrow the walls of man's traditional building, but he tries carefully to lift them so that the foundation upon which they rest will be seen. He knows that if he dares

undermine them, he will take away the foundation, yet he would try and move the materialism.

The girl who is listening is hurt, righteously she dares to repudiate all he says—the more she contends, the more she sees, the walls that she imagined were so stable begin to tremble.

“Come from behind them,” he almost appealingly says.

“Miss Flora, never mind just now. What will repel you to-day may draw you to-morrow. I will tell you a story. A man in prison garb, decked in the vestments of the establishment which held him, is in the open garden outside its walls carefully planting a little root of woodbine close to those walls. Two innocent children look through the trellised fence; one, a little maid, says to her fellow: ‘Come away, he is a naughty man.’ The man shrinks, and in shame looks not round; he knew his own little one’s voice. Back he goes to his cell after this exercise. The child joins the nurse, saying, ‘When will daddy come home?’ Years pass by, a sentence is being fulfilled, a soft piece of woodbine is unfolding its tendrils within the gratings;

patiently had it climbed that wall of morbid reflection, it blooms, its fragrance steals in the day he is released. Turning to it, he drinks in the pervading and invisible loveliness—released, reconciled. Those who loved him found that that which social etiquette failed to produce, God’s love had.”

On, the missionary meanders in thought as he explains : that man in the happiest of earthly surroundings is more prone to fall, than man who is militating against life’s various perplexities.

“ But,” says Flora, “ surely the love of Him who is love constraineth us ? ”

“ Think of the profound thing love is ; think of the wealth she is ready to dispense ; think of the fear which mellows love when righteousness is awakened to defend.”

Awakened, the man proceeds in his philosophies :

“ Love is like ivy, it preserves ; clingingly it holds together many decaying and crumbling walls—it helps our veneration by memorializing the best traditions. With love’s golden strands ever reciprocating, a life of great merit is better patterned ; woven upon no tawdry fabric is the life

divine as the spool unrolls and the shuttle shifts releasing the golden thread which in truth reveals a thing of lasting and eternal beauty."

"Go on, Mr. Heathlyn, tell me more of love!"

"More than I can tell the Nazarene revealed. It took the human life-time of His to truly show love's capacity its great possibilities. Love binds souls together in healthy attachment, it is the fervid welding of links drawn from a holy warmth beyond man: but fires which man must pass through. Love is an act which does not simply veil, but submerges man beneath all local and temporal aggrandisement of self; it is the surrendering of the immediate hope of gain for an assurance in a higher peace. Love alone justifies faith, as each proven link of attachment becomes a chain unbreakable. Love is won by the surrender, not the sacrifice of all fleeting privileges; finding that rich opportunity is purely involved in every allotment of responsibility. Love does not imperil moral sanctity; but, it binds lives together to pass on all that which is best in holy chastity. Love, when real, is tinged by fear, and thus tests loyalty,

even to the awakening of righteous indignation. Love can be acquired—it is not simply an impulse, it is of nature eternal : it is a faculty to every sense, it has no defined measures nor degrees.

“ Finally, Miss Flora—Love is the effort of life’s noblest energies, and is only active in true fidelity—greater love hath no man than this.”

Quietly the lass withdraws for a few minutes, then returning with a little autograph album, she says : “ Put it all down, more if you can think it, use every page. You must be fed ! ”

With this the conversation was not renewed until after tea, when the household assembled in the snug front room for a little music—this was sparingly sandwiched in between stories and experiences.

Campbell turns to Heathlyn to acknowledge a debt.

“ Heathlyn, I was proud of you the day you said : ‘ The Creator left this earth wanting for nothing ; we gathered hopefully, others before us gathered, there was much yet to be utilized, and much more even here to be revealed, as God’s Light was continuous.’ ”

“Thank you, Mr. Campbell. Surely every day should be like a carefully linked gathering of jewels scintillating only with happy reflections.”

“What I liked most, Mr. Heathlyn, was your exposition of the parable of the steward who was falsely accused. I like to think of it as a poor man’s encouragement ; yes, we are taken at our face value : one may only come up to fifty per cent., another only to eighty. Remain as just as that steward and tell the Master what you found good amongst us.”

“You left us with a little hope, anyway,” says Campbell.

“Hope is expectant ; yet, there comes a time when hope will see that everything lies not in the future as the eternal present applies the best that was garnered from the past.”

Flora is all attention, and lets not this thought go by unsupported ; the mind of the man commands hers. Says she : “I once had a vision : The Angel of Hope alighted upon this sphere ; wherever it stopped it was seen to be looking up, it left with those it came in contact : the spirit of aspiration—the onward, upward

suggestion. Time upon time it alighted upon different parts of this sphere. Surely, I said to myself—God gave us this sphere that our look be outward—we look up ! ”

“ It was my pleasure once meeting an old Yorkshireman up in the goldfields,” said Heathlyn, and then he went on to tell his story.

“ William Moody stood with hoe in hand between two rows of beans. Time had dealt kindly with the old man, who was a true optimist. Turning to me, he said, ‘ Never despair, young man.’ At the same time his finger and thumb searched his waistcoat pocket for the piece of tobacco which was to fill his pipe while he chatted. ‘ Never despair, young man ; no field is known until it is properly prospected—many fields have never yet been prospected. Prospecting is not scratching the surface. Fossickers are always in a hurry ; the true prospector never has his vision truly materialized.’ ”

Heathlyn then went on to explain that this man was ninety-three years old, that he had for forty years worked as a miner on many fields, twenty of which he spent in East Gippsland, with varying success.

Resuming the thread of the old man's testimony, all attentively listened.

" ' Young man, when I was a young man in Yorkshire—that's a day or two ago—folk said the coal fields would peter-out in a year or more. When I reflect upon it, young man, I remember that there was plenty of light and warmth stored away for man, it is still there ; and light is now coming from the invisible for man's use, yes, from an unseen store. 'There is gold in these hills too ; but, there is that range the psalmist speaks of—there wealth lies—there is a light I am now getting, without the use of glasses, in reading Dean Farrar's *Life of Christ*.' "

So the evening was spent. All agreed that there was no weakness in that old man so full of hope.

" You often go to the blind man's home, do you not, Mr. Heathlyn ? That is a good little girl of theirs."

" Mr. Campbell, she is ; I think that you would all love her if you knew her. Stella is the brightness of the blind musician's home, she is the light which shines upon their earth. The blind mother bends less and less over her domestic duties as her

daughter's strength increases ; she is more than occasional usefulness lent to these two happy though benighted people. The other day I was entering their gate when I heard these words : ‘ Stella, dear, is everything neat and clean, oh child—my eyes ? How I love to have you near me. When you were ever so tiny, you saw things I never saw, you thought of things no one else ever seemed to have been able to think for me ; you make life so full, so happy. My Heavenly Father is good to me, for He did send some one along to bear the cross.’ Quietly Stella turns to the mother who had never seen her. ‘ Mother mine, you have now five other little stars to reflect God’s love.’ ‘ Oh, how I wish it, dear,’ the mother said ; ‘ but somehow, I cannot help but believe that one star differeth from another in glory.’ ”

The honest heart of Flora Campbell’s from that moment nurtured a love for the little girl in the blind man’s home.

On, the missionary went, as he turned everyone’s thoughts toward another little one in the field of duty.

“ No matter how young, there is work for all to do,” says Heathlyn.

“What a sweet and lovely little mother is Monica: the robins, tits, and wrens flew down to greet her the first morning she came out to prattle in her three year language to me. For a moment she stood between a bush of white Christmas tree and another of purple, just in circle chaste was a piece of clematis upon her raven locks. Monica only had two human friends, and they were dumb; though not yet four, she could converse with signs upon her little fingers. Mother once had heard that soothing baby tongue, but not now. Father had never heard her little articulations of joy. A sagacious collie shared that selection; he loved the only human voice of the household which addressed him. Father’s smart little Arab pony most respectfully bent his neck to have his muzzle touched; he understood the wish and his black eyes looked into Monica’s dark brown ones.”

Just diverting for awhile, Heathlyn explained how the father had anxiously interrogated him, as to whether “the child could speak,” and how sad it was for him to explain that the little one had a language of her own; only a word here

and there could she use that he truly understood, but she did make herself understood.

“ Little Monica no doubt spoke in the language wherein she was born ; no hand had yet led her to those artificial channels which certain societies had developed. Her thoughts so pure found holy strength in virgin utterances. Her mother had lost the faculty of hearing, also that of speaking, through a long and patient companionship with her husband in an isolated selection. Monica when a baby was the only witness of an elder sister’s martyrdom (as the flames so hurt that little body that she died) ; no one heard little Monica’s call—when she was found she was spent with crying. What a merry laugh ripples from her throat when at play with her pets ! What a communion more keenly enjoyed by both parents when they see Monica happy ! ”

With these words, Heathlyn gives way to Mrs. Campbell, as she tells her story of a certain little girl.

“ Some years ago a lady friend of mine was spending a few days on the ocean front. One nice bright morning this lady

and her little daughter went upon the beach to have a blow. My friend carefully instructed the little girl to keep within certain bounds. 'Trust, dear, you can play upon this nice white sand, do not go beyond those great big rocks ; mother will stay here and read.'

"So engrossed was the mother in her book, that she did not notice the time go by until the shadow under which she stayed, had passed. Dropping her book, she hurries to the sand below, and quickly follows the little footprints, which she loses at the rock's edge. Here and there a little piece of crushed sea-weed gathered with a shell lay by the baby's described path. She climbs the cliffs. Her child she sees below—to her she could not descend—walls of rock closed every way. Waving to her babe, she gets an answer. Then to her Father in Heaven she cried with a mother's breaking heart. The little one joined that prayer. The sea was rising. Suddenly a fisherman's dinghy appears as if from nowhere ; in it is a man quietly coasting, and carefully rising upon every lifting swell—he sees the babe, the mother too he sees—the rest you know."

Quietly Flora moves to the piano, and her fingers find a tune which all find words for, though only the instrument is heard.

Then on, until supper came along, many little things of lesser interest come into the conversation. How the young man from the construction-camp was unable to reconcile his views with those of old Mr. Cameron was much enjoyed.

Says Campbell: “ Bender went along one evening from your choir-practice with the old man’s daughter; he went in to supper and was soon quite happy under that roof which protected the girl. Turning to the old Highlander, he asked, ‘ Would you mind me paying my attentions to your daughter ? ’ The old man turns quietly and looks the questioner up and down for a few seconds; then he answers by a question: ‘ Ye’d be engeeged twa a lassie in thia ceety, they say ? ’ Bender admits that he is, and tries to explain. The old man, with a quiet wave of the hand and a whimsical smile, says: ‘ I’m much obleeged, I’m sure, it’s a’ verra interestin’; I’m mighty pleased that ye tould me. Foller me ! ’ Turning into the passage, the old man led the way to the hat-rack,

'I think that is ye're hat. Heare's tha door. Yon's the gate—'tis tha way oot; let it ne'r be tha way in!'"

Again Heathlyn brings everyone's thoughts back to the grander pictures which influence men to think more seriously of this life of wonderful beauty which is everyone's to share.

Carefully he placed the picture conversely.

"Before a child's grave stood about a score of barehead men; some had already with tender care lifted the little coffin from a pack-saddle, then as carefully lowered it into the tomb. Big strong fellows who were not afraid to let flow the pearls of purity which chastened nature bid in limpid drops to come to the release of pent-up nature.

"Yes, they witnessed the disposal of the body of earthliness; but, the father tells a better story. Coming in tired, late from his cleaning up the paddock over which the fire had gone, he says: 'Wife, where is Ariel?'

"'I'm afraid, John, that she has loitered this evening; though, mind you, it is a long and lonely walk from school for our little girl.'

“ The wife and mother looks up at the clock ; she shows a little alarm as she says : ‘ John, the child was never before so late Why, it is quite dark ! ’

“ ‘ Wife, I will take the lantern and go search for her.’

“ Peering, groping, carefully he examines the track. Anxiously he moves along ; at last, he halts beside a tree which that day had fallen. Limb by limb is gently lifted : almost believing, yet trying to doubt, he continues his work—he finds his little one.

“ Placing his lantern upon the ground, he reverently removes each leaf and twig from the peaceful face ; though her spirit had wrestled, still it left no sad mark upon the lovely brow.

“ Taking the human tabernacle lovingly in his arms, he presses its cold walls to his warm breast, saying : ‘ Ariel, darling, our Heavenly Father loved you best.’

“ Staggering brokenly along without his lantern, his path seems lit ; lo ! a company of angels are carrying a child so like his Ariel before him.

“ He utters : ‘ Thank God, it is my Ariel ! ’ ”

CHAPTER XIV

CLOSING SCENES

JUST look into the homes of The Otway Forest to-day: the homes so patiently built by the settlers and pioneers. These are all so snug and comfortable, these are nearly all so sweet and tidy. Much is still in the doing, much still to be done.

In retrospect we review the long, lonely, and varied trials which the patient and persistent bravely faced.

There is a picture-farm nestling into the mountain buttresses and spreading its fields to the winding stream below. The owner of this estate has something to boast of; he is not a giant, but he is a mighty little man. Thirteen years ago he trudged his three days' journey leading two pack-horses; upon these he had a tent, a quarter's rations, a few tools, a wife and child, who occasionally had a ride;

in his pocket one pound, in his mind the fulfilment of a contract to clean up fifty acres of another man's selection. Some weeks, owing to the wet, he was only able to earn five shillings. Think of what he had to make up during those other weeks!

His own place is in perfect order, and five thousand pounds will not lift him from his place to-day. The age says: "What is wanted to-day on the land is men scientifically trained." Here we have a cabinet-maker who learnt the art of farming in a Lancashire factory. Beside him once a Dookie student gave in, while working for another neighbour who was another theorist.

Listen to the little Englishman as he tells you:

"Active fidelity is the thing that counts, confidence not alone your own. Be ever ready to learn. Do not imagine that you know because someone else showed you, and did it perfectly; many a man may read a book, but the thoughts are best applied by those of experience. It does not depend upon the wife a man has; it all depends upon the man the wife has, that is—if the wife is good."

Heathlyn and Crumbles had journeyed

together to share those last few days with the men "who counted."

Again the little Englishman claims their attention :

"Time upon time he was tempted to return to the ease of regular city wages. Do you see those shells over there ? Some are fourteen feet through ; twelve years ago they were dead. I am still charring and stoving them. The scrub and fern we slashed off, then burnt off, not only once. The fire came when our three hundred acres was all grassed ; the grass we lost, and the bracken took hold. How many days in the six of the week it rained ; well, stay here for awhile and count."

Heathlyn is more than interested ; he has his own way of encouraging those who awaken his interest :

"Such men as you never stayed in a rut. Maud was deep in one the other day on Slinger's Gap. The old wheel-track was filled with a soft sediment which had silted into it—a little softness as it gathers sometimes stays progress. The great framed bullocks lurched upon their yokes as they slipped upon the muck-stone hillside ; again and again the chain creaked as it tightened.

There was only one thing for it, and that to clear the wheels—one we had to lever out and lift the forecarriage from dragging. Then the driver, with yearning and commanding appeal, quickly recited the team's names as each in character found his rapid glance; the whip cracked, and in unity they lifted the burden, which slowly trundled on."

After a meal and many pleasantries the friends turned to their saddles to make another call.

Crisp is just back from town. He is in high spirits, as he had won a case at the police-court.

"Mr. Heathlyn, I am glad you came along before going away. I do not know what you thought of me over the heifer stealing case? Fortunately for me, that I had good witnesses; Cotter gave substantial proof that he sold it to me with a pen of others which he had been spec buying. I would far rather have settled the case out of court even to the losing of a pound or two. As it is, I am now a pound or two in pocket."

Heathlyn had never entertained a doubt about Crisp; but, the man who had sum-

moned Crisp he had always been anxious about, and many times covered unhealthy rumours regarding him.

"Mr. Crisp, I think that everybody settled your case out of court. I hope that this will socially settle the other man for others' sakes."

Chat turns to the churches in course of completion, and the two school buildings; Crisp promises to have his and the neighbours' donations in the secretary's hands before Heathlyn leaves.

Crumbles is enjoying a chat with young Beecher, who is down to pick out a few young cows.

There is a quaint story told of Earnest Beecher, and it loses nothing in Crumbles' hands. After leaving Mr. Crisp's, Crumbles relates the yarn to Heathlyn.

"About a year ago Ernie awoke to the Adam consciousness—there was something wanting; he mooned about the garden with a jam-tin until he found the plant of bleeding-heart which was blooming. One small part he transplants in the tin; this he carefully places in his pocket as he turns to the fence where his horse is saddled. Like a thief he stealthily leads his horse

right on to the road. Fearfully glancing about in this lonely spot, he imagines that someone saw him ; putting spurs to the brute's ribs, he is hurled along as the animal plugs through the mud. At last he reaches the selection where Mabel Toner lives—with trembling knees he stands before the door, with shaking hand he knocks. Mrs. Toner quietly opens and allows the light from the kitchen lamp fall upon her visitor. ' Is it you, Earnest ? I hope that there is nothing wrong at your place ? ' Pale and spotted with mud the face of the youth, his clothes as dirty. He blurts out—' Is Mabel 'ome ? 'Ere's a pot of bleedin'-'eart ! ' Mabel's mother took it, and Earnest vanished."

Heathlyn could hardly credit it, but Crumbles drew the missionary's attention to a plant of the same kind which held a place in Toner's garden. " The plant didn't vanish, anyway ! "

Bell is putting a new straining-post up beside the old one, which is very shaky. The new one is a pretty log of satin-box with a beautiful fiddle-back marking.

Bell's mare is waiting in chains to lend her strength upon the wires.

"Great mare that, sir!"

Heathlyn had already paid her a little attention.

"She is aged and a bit over, but she has done a lot on this place. I have still two of her foals. The last foal she had witnessed a lively fight the old girl had with a snake. The wife and I were just finishing separating when we heard a peculiar scream. Out we ran—again we heard it. I ran up to the five-acres; there she was with her fore feet striking something on the ground, as she continued to make a peculiar cry. Going up to her I found a snake in pieces. I thought that she had been hurt, but she came out all right."

"Every hand seems to be turned against the snake," says Heathlyn, as he picks up a piece of sapling to help Bell with his post.

Crumbles asks them: "Did they hear of the snake which was weighed-out in the scales?"

Neither had, so he went on to relate how two scaley creatures met in the Aire River.

"That old angler from Melbourne found a twenty-two inch rainbow-trout floating on the top of the water with a snake partly swallowed. Both, he said—were dead."

Bell enjoys a chat as he works, especially as the visitors help; then later at the house he informs the missionary that: "O'Brien is going to give a fiver to the new church; it is a silent sermon, O'Brien thinks—he promised a fiver to the first people who put up such a building in this district, whether Catholic or Protestant. There is another guinea forthcoming from another Catholic near by. He says: 'A hall near the pub is no place for the worship of God.' He hopes that their people will soon think of building—he has a tenner when they are ready, and his wife a bit less."

On all sides the missionary meets with much encouragement; and, leaving Bell's in the moonlight, they turn back to that little Englishman's home, where a few friends are waiting to enjoy a musical evening.

Making his way for this place a month ago one Friday evening, he went by the track skirted by the marine frontage fence. On his right lay one hundred and sixty acres of the best river-flat country probably in Victoria. Here ninety cows passed through the bails every day, seventy other kine of varying ages shared their grass, thirty brood sows and their litters also

browsed thereon ; while, a flock of fifty ewes, which dwindled as creature wants were supplied, shared the same rich pasture with seven horses—sometimes, a little help was found on the tussocked sea-fronts.

At this place in respective homes the missionary conducted a fortnightly service at nine-thirty at night, and many who came along, did so through much mud and journeys of an hour or more.

What a time Donal and the missionary had one afternoon some months ago when they came along this same road for a meeting of the school-committee. 'The new survey had been made, and the fence had been removed ; down in the hollow beside the big sand-dune there was always a little reservoir of water—this crossed from fence to fence. Donal had come back into the missionary's hands for the few weeks during his last mid-winter in the forest ; he had often passed this place before.

Turning to Crumbles, Heathlyn pointed out the spot and detailed the experience.

" I let Donal take his own track ; suddenly he went down to the girth. Then I applied the spurs, the poor old brute made a struggle but sank lower. Again the spurs

were applied, and after a very violent plunge Donal went down over his ears. I threw myself off and stood to the waist in that dirty and murky mess. With a mighty effort Donal got his forelegs free—whether I helped him or not I do not know; he rolled towards me—the cheek-strap of the bridle was broken, also one of the reins; the saddle and valise were filled with black silt.”

This time nothing of any importance occurred, and in a few minutes they were passing the little cottage where Bob Gordon and his wife lived. Bob is cutting up a little wood for the stove when Heathlyn notices him: back he turns.

“ Good-evening, Bob! How is the wife? I was just telling Mr. Crumbles about my experiences over on the flat.”

Bob immediately asks the two to come in, but they explain that they are on their way to Spencer’s.

Bob turns to Crumbles. “ It is a lovely night. You ought to have seen the missionary the evening he dropped in over there!”

“ He was telling me, Mr. Gordon.”

“ I’ll tell you a little more. Up he came to the fence, and asked me to let the

Spencers know what had happened. I called the wife ; she looked at him, and without passing the time of the day, she said : ‘ Wait a minute ; I will be out in a minute.’ Out she came with a towel damped under the kettle-spout. Says she : ‘ If you use this we will be able to see who you are.’ Of course she feigned surprise as she again addressed him : ‘ Oh ! you are the minister.’ We went through everyones trunks in our minds’ eyes, but there was nothing to fit.”

“ Now do not tell everyone, Bob. I know that I was in a fearful mess, and had to ride for two hours with sand in my clothes, which were wet. Tell the wife I will look in to see her in the morning ! ”

“ It took you an hour or two to clean the kit, Mr. Heathlyn, I guess ? ”

An evening at Spencer’s was always very much enjoyed. There was not one in that house who did not make the outrider feel at home. This was one of the last social gatherings the outrider was to have, at least for awhile, with the people of the forest. That night he was almost persuaded to remain another year.

Mrs. Spencer in bidding him good-bye says :

" We have much to thank you for ; you got us our school-teacher. The church is a little far away from us, but it was fine seeing a congregation of one hundred and twenty souls at service the opening day. Everybody turned out—thirty odd horses there in the afternoon. Did you ever hear such singing ? "

" The grand thing is that it is almost paid for. The singing helped it a bit."

The parting with Crumbles was a sad wrench ; many happy evenings had they enjoyed a chat together.

" Mr. Heathlyn, I never knew a father. The folk who looked after me said that all they knew of me was that my mother was hurt by a cab in the city, and in a few hours passed away, not able to tell anyone who she was. I am glad that names will not count for much up there. I feel sure that mother is waiting all right. The name my first friends gave to me was Crumples, somehow it came to Crumbles ; they also told me that my mother was a good woman, and had me very clean and well cared for."

" Charley, our ways may meet again in this state ; then you will be of as much

help to me as you have always been. No! names will all go for naught some day, it is what a man is that will count. There would be great confusion in sorting out the Sandy McDonalds if it was a name only which could describe them. Man will be that conscious of himself that he will know for what he is wanted."

The last evening sped along; others came in.

Heathlyn turns from his packing to deliver a parting command: "Charley, see that the timber for the other school-house goes down as soon as the first week's dry weather comes; it has now been three months on the wagon."

No need for the other to answer that he would, his reply itself expressed his feelings plain enough.

"Two church-buildings, two school-houses in ten months is a record. I am proud of you—proud that it was Crumbles who introduced you. No welcome social! No farewell social! You stirred them up, though. No wonder they cannot afford a full stipend and a purse by the way!"

"Let that go, Charley. I hope that what I have done will bring the people

closer together than they were. Everybody wanted a church or a school on this or that particular site. It is a pleasure to know that they are now content with the few buildings they have. Some folk still say that I did not take them enough into my confidence in the matter ; when I am far away they will find the confidence I reposed in them."

The packing goes on, and a few pamphlets and papers Crumbles gathers together.

"If you see the blind man, Mr. Heathlyn, tell him that we try and keep cheerful without him."

"Do you remember the day that the trolly raced down the hill, with that young fellow from the construction camp on top?"

"Remember it, Mr. Heathlyn ! I do not think that I will ever forget it. I am glad he came round."

"The first man to draw my attention to it was the blind man. He called to me : 'Look at him ! I have been watching him.' He never really saw him, and when he walked down with me later to enquire, he listened to the driver of ballast-engine as he described how the race ended. Again he said : 'I see.' "

"Yes, no wonder, indeed! I see it all as plainly as if it was to-day. How he must have swiftly turned the big bend, then with a cry—'Pull out! Pull out!' It was a good thing that he came to grief before he struck the upcoming train. Wheels and platform spinning, he himself like a ball bouncing through the bracken, burrs and logs. It is a good thing he came through."

A knock at the door, and Mavis says :

"We will have breakfast ready for you before you go."

After a few kind words from Heathlyn, the little maid withdraws with Mr. Crumbles quietly in attendance.

The missionary turns to a photo in his room:

"I often wonder whether I am worthy of her. I am sure that Mavis and Crumbles understand each other's feelings. It will be grand seeing those two dear friends again—mother and Gladys."

THE END

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